

# Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium

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This article addresses the question of how marriage helped to shape Byzantine material culture, or, put another way, how the material culture of Byzantium reflects the rituals and values of marriage. The question properly encompasses all facets of betrothal and marriage, the ceremonial, legal, moral, and sexual. And it should include as well all potential categories of marriage-related artifact, from illustrated historical chronicles portraying real marriages and the coins issued to commemorate them, to the rings, crowns, and belts used to punctuate and confirm various stages of the ritualized union, to the gifts exchanged by the couple or offered by friends, to the amulets worn by one or the other to protect their union and ensure successful procreation.

The evidence, although abundant, is homogeneous neither in character nor in quantity across the millennium of Byzantine history. That from late Antiquity is at once richer in its variety and more subtle in its iconography than is the relatively sparser evidence from the middle and late Byzantine periods, which tends to reflect a more literal approach. Characteristic of the latter are the marriage scenes in the twelfth-century copy of the John Skylitzes chronicle in Madrid.<sup>1</sup> The minia-

ture on folio 125r (Fig. 1), for example, represents the union of Emperor Constantine VII and Helen, the daughter of Romanos I, Lekapenos.<sup>2</sup> This scene, when coupled with middle Byzantine texts of the marriage ceremony and passages in the *Book of Ceremonies* distinguishing the wedding *stephanos* from the imperial *stemma*, and surviving marriage crowns of the period, like the pair in the Byzantine Museum of Athens (Fig. 2), graphically evokes the experiential reality of a middle Byzantine wedding.<sup>3</sup> Similarly straightforward in its approach is an inscribed middle Byzantine betrothal ring in the Stathatos Collection, Athens (Fig. 3), whose bezel bears simply the words “I, Goudeles, give the betrothal ring to Maria.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Figure 1 = Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, cod. 5–3, no. 2, fol. 125r. See Estopañan, *Skylitzes matritensis*, no. 305.

<sup>3</sup>For the Byzantine betrothal and marriage ceremonies, see P. N. Trempela, “He akolouthia ton mnestron kai tou gamou,” *Theologia* 18 (1940), 101–96 (based on manuscripts of the 9th through 17th centuries). For the distinction between the two crowns, see Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis aulae byzantinae*, II, 6–9.

Figure 2 = Athens, Byzantine Museum, nos. 7663a, b. See P. A. Drossoyianni, “A Pair of Byzantine Crowns,” *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten III/3 = JÖB* 32.3 (1982), 529–38. Drossoyianni is overly cautious in identifying these crowns—which are a match for those in the Madrid Skylitzes, clearly form a pair, are large enough to be worn, and bear a passage from the Psalms (20:3) used in the marriage ceremony (Trempela, “He akolouthia,” 153 f)—as specifically marriage crowns. Because their main inscription is an invocation, on behalf of “Romanos the *spatharokandidatos* together with his wife and children,” she sees them as “votive offerings to a church” (even though made of tin-plated copper). Yet Byzantine marriage rings do occasionally bear invocations (see M. Hadzidakis [Chatzidakis], “Un anneau byzantin du Musée Benaki,” *BNJ* 17 [1939–43], nos. 80, 89; and note 97 below), and it was not unusual for late Roman marriage rings to invoke long life in a general and anticipatory way on behalf of the groom’s family (see F. Henkel, *Die römischen Fingerringe der Rheinlande* [Berlin, 1913], 322). Noteworthy also are late Roman sarcophagi where on the *dextrarum iunctio*, as generally symbolizing the matrimonial bond, takes place in the presence of the couple’s children; see L. Reekmans, “La ‘dextrarum iunctio’ dans l’iconographie romaine et paléochrétienne,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Historique Belge de Rome* 21 (1958), 68 f.

<sup>4</sup>ΜΝΗCΤΡΟΝ ΔΙΔΟΜΗ ΓΟΥΔΕΛΗC ΜΑΡΙΑ. Figure 3 = Athens, Stathatos Collection. See *Collection Hélène Stathatos*, 2:

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After fifty years the most useful general treatment of early Byzantine marriage remains that of K. Ritzler’s 1940 Würzburg dissertation, here cited in its French translation, *Le mariage dans les églises chrétiennes du I<sup>er</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1970). As for marriage-related art of the period, the standard publication is still the insightful though partial treatment by E. H. Kantorowicz, “On the Gold Marriage Belt and the Marriage Rings of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection,” *DOP* 14 (1960), 3–16.

<sup>1</sup>See S. Cirac Estopañan, *Skylitzes matritensis*, I. *Reproducciones y miniaturas* (Barcelona-Madrid, 1965), nos. 133, 221, 305, 325, 481, 491, 511, 549; and, for the dating of the manuscript, N. G. Wilson, “The Madrid Skylitzes,” *Scrittura e civiltà* 2 (1978), 209–19. See also A. Grabar and M. Manoussacas, *L’illustration du manuscrit de Skylitzès de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Madrid*, Bibliothèque de l’Institut Hellénique d’Etudes Byzantines et Post-Byzantines de Venise 10 (Venice, 1979), 159, for a brief, general discussion of the manuscript’s marriage iconography.

By contrast, the evidence of the early Byzantine gold marriage belt at Dumbarton Oaks (Fig. 31) is much more complex.<sup>5</sup> Christ and Dionysos are interlocked in a common thematic conceit, and the seemingly unrelated notions of concord, grace, and health are inscriptionally linked as “from God.” The paired clasps are dominated by an apparently realistic representation of the *dextrarum iunctio*, which actually had no precise visual counterpart in the ritual it evokes.<sup>6</sup> Yet the belt itself played an instrumental role at quite a different juncture in the same ceremony. All of this makes the Dumbarton Oaks belt much less a document of an experiential reality than one of a deeper, conceptual reality.

Further distinguishing the earlier from the later evidence is that the latter is so sparse and heterogeneous that it cannot properly be said to constitute a historically distinct unit within later Byzantine art history generally. Early Byzantine marriage-related art, by contrast, has its own identity and tradition within the history of late antique material culture as, from the fourth to seventh century, it gradually emerges out of later Roman art and is progressively adapted to the needs of a Christian, east Mediterranean clientele. This marriage art will, therefore, constitute the core of this paper.

During the early Byzantine period, as today, the single object most intimately associated with marriage was the ring. And then, as now, there was a distinction between the betrothal ring and the

wedding ring, with the former, the *annulus pronubus*, in part functioning as, or at least symbolizing, the prenuptial *arrabon* or earnest money.<sup>7</sup> Both rings would have been worn on the third finger of the left hand, the *anularius*, since it was then still commonly believed that a nerve or sinew ran directly from that finger to the heart.<sup>8</sup> As Aulus Gellius had explained it:

When the human body is cut open as the Egyptians do and when dissections, or *anatamai* as the Greeks phrase it, are practiced on it, a very delicate nerve is found which starts from the annular finger and travels to the heart. It is, therefore, thought seemly to give to this finger in preference to all others the honour of the ring, on account of the close connection which links it with the principal organ.<sup>9</sup>

In late Antiquity marriage rings were worn by both men and women, although only the bride-to-be would customarily receive the *annulus pronubus*.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in theory at least, three rings would typically be associated with each marriage.<sup>11</sup> But in fact, the number of rings extant from this period which are identifiable by their inscription or imagery as specifically related to betrothal or marriage is relatively small, and of those that do survive, a disproportionately high number are made of gold.<sup>12</sup> In part this may reflect a perpetuation in

*Les objets byzantins et post-byzantins* (n.l., n.d.), no. 33. “Goudeles” is a well-known Byzantine family name, attested as early as the 11th century. See Νέος Έλλ. 13 (1916), 212–21. For a pair of similar betrothal rings in gold and silver formerly in the Guilhou Collection, which bear the word *mnestron* and what have been taken to be the names of King Stephan Radoslav of Serbia (1228–34) and his wife Anna Komnene, daughter of Emperor Theodore Angelos Komnenos Doukas of Thessalonike, see Hadzidakis, “Un anneau,” no. 90; and S. de Ricci, *Catalogue of a Collection of Ancient Rings Formed by the Late E. Guilhou* (Paris, 1912), nos. 853, 855. The silver ring is now at Dumbarton Oaks (no. 47.2.2294; along with no. 47.2.2293, which appears to be its copy). The appropriateness of an identically inscribed set of gold and silver betrothal rings is confirmed by the text of the Byzantine betrothal ceremony, which assigns a gold ring to the man and a silver ring to the woman; see Trempela, “He akolouthia,” 117.

<sup>5</sup>See M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Medieval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Volume II: Jewelry, Enamels, and Art of the Migration Period* (Washington, D.C., 1965), no. 38.

<sup>6</sup>See C. Reinsberg, “Concordia,” *Spätantike und frühes Christentum* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), 312; Reekmans, “La ‘dextrarum iunctio,’” 25; and note 114 below.

<sup>7</sup>In addition to the customary commitment of money and a ring, other less common betrothal gifts included crosses, jewelry, and clothing. See Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 127–29; and for the distinction between the betrothal and the wedding ring, Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 337–39.

<sup>8</sup>Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, VII.13; and Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, II.20.8. See Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 337, 341, and ring no. 1033, showing clasped hands holding a heart. The Orthodox betrothal service, as it had taken shape in the middle Byzantine period (Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 129 f), and as it survives today, stipulates that the betrothal rings—*ta daktylidia tou arrabonos*—be placed on the third finger of the right hand, the hand with which divine authority and power was customarily expressed (Trempela, “He akolouthia,” 134 f).

<sup>9</sup>*Noctes atticae*, X.10, in J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (London, 1941), 81.

<sup>10</sup>Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 339; and Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 127 f.

<sup>11</sup>Of course this does not include those rings made for husband or wife to mark significant anniversary dates, birthdays, or the new year. Certainly such rings did exist (Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 338), and there is no reason to think that their inscriptions or imagery would differ fundamentally from true marriage rings.

<sup>12</sup>There is a striking absence of identifiable marriage rings from such rich late antique archaeological sites as Corinth and Sardis. See G. R. Davidson, *Corinth, Volume XII: The Minor Objects* (Princeton, 1952), 227–48; and J. C. Waldbaum, *Metalwork from Sardis: The Finds through 1974* (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1983), 128–33. For the disproportionate number of late antique gold marriage rings (identifiably Christian, and of eastern Mediterranean manufacture), see notes 22, 45, and 97 below, listing extant examples in all media of the three main iconographic types.

Byzantium of the Roman custom, attested by Pliny, of giving an unadorned iron hoop in betrothal, and in part it simply may have been an unintended byproduct of the church fathers' preaching against the wearing of many rings; for if, as Clement of Alexandria stipulated, a housewife could wear just one ring—a signet to seal doors, cabinets, and food storage vessels around the home—she and her husband may have chosen to make that ring function as a marriage ring as well, even if its device were not specific to that role.<sup>13</sup> In either case the marriage (or betrothal) ring would be unidentifiable from our vantage point.

Viewed more broadly, this disproportion of gold to bronze suggests that it was primarily among the wealthy and powerful of early Byzantium that marriage rings were taken to be a significant genre of personal adornment in their own right.<sup>14</sup> Had the situation been otherwise, it would have been a simple matter for Byzantine craftsmen to replicate gold marriage rings in silver, bronze, or even glass, just as they replicated gold invocal rings and belt fittings, among other jewelry items, in various less expensive media.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the close iconographic bond between those relatively few surviving gold marriage rings and contemporary gold coinage, and the frequency with which the bridal couple on ring bezels appears to be "imperial" in portrait type, headgear, or dress, corroborate the notion that the clientele for early Byzantine marriage rings was substantially confined to the topmost level of society.<sup>16</sup>

How can an early Byzantine marriage ring be identified? Theoretically, even a simple iron or bronze band, or an anonymous gold band set with an unincised stone, could be linked to marriage if it were discovered through excavation on the ring

finger of the left hand, or if it were found to match a ring portrayed on that finger in a contemporary mural or on a sculpture.<sup>17</sup> Such opportunities, however, are rare, and in any event one cannot be certain that the *anularius* was reserved solely for betrothal and marriage rings. One is left, therefore, with the supposition that a significant portion of the hundreds of simple metal bands extant from the period once functioned as marriage rings, and with the knowledge that only a relatively few, mostly precious metal, rings were explicitly destined for marriage through their inscriptions or iconography.

Many Roman marriage rings are identifiable by the words they bear. Paired names are common, as are a variety of phrases evoking such generic matrimonial good wishes as long life, fidelity, and happiness (e.g., *Prudentia Rodani vivas, concordia nostra perpetua sit*)—phrases which, by the later fourth century, were often given a specifically Christian slant (e.g., *Tecla vivat deo cum marito seo*).<sup>18</sup> By contrast, Byzantine inscriptional marriage rings of any period are uncommon, with the *mnes-tron didome* ring cited above a rare exception.<sup>19</sup> Beyond this, there are just a few invocal rings with both male and female names (e.g., "Lord, help Basil and Anna"), and even fewer rings with personalized twin bezel devices (e.g., a bisected oval bezel at Dumbarton Oaks, with "Basil-Theodora").<sup>20</sup> At no time in Byzantine history can such rings be said to constitute a genre in their own right.

In effect, a Byzantine marriage ring can be identified almost solely by virtue of the image, often with accompanying inscription, that it bears on its bezel. Whether it might be a betrothal ring, a marriage ring, or perhaps an anniversary ring is not explicitly clear, although it is reasonable to assume that those rings showing the *dextrarum iunctio* or inscribed with *homonoia* ("concord") would not be be-

<sup>13</sup> Pliny, *Natural History*, XXX.12; Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 337; and J. Dölger, "Anulus pronubus," *Antike und Christentum* 5 (1936), 188–200. Clement of Alexandria, *Paidagogos*, III.11.

<sup>14</sup> Although evidence from the Roman period (Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 339) suggests that then, too, many couples of lesser means chose simple metal bands for betrothal and marriage, nevertheless there survives a much higher proportion of inscriptional and iconographic bronze marriage rings from that period than later, in Byzantium.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., G. Vikan and J. Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium: Locking, Sealing and Weighing*, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection Publications 2 (Washington, D.C., 1980), 5, 16.

<sup>16</sup> For the differential impact of early Byzantine marriage legislation on various strata of society, see E. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e–7e siècles*, *Civilisations et sociétés* 48 (Paris, 1977), 117. Marvin Ross (*Catalogue*, no. 66) was so persuaded by the imperial character of some early Byzantine marriage rings as to suggest, with no other evidence, that they were issued by the court in multiples, like medallions, to commemorate imperial marriages.

<sup>17</sup> See Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 342 f. Clement of Alexandria, in the passage from the *Paidagogos* cited above (note 13), stipulated that a man should wear his seal ring on his little finger, below the lowermost knuckle. For a gold marriage ring found in a 3rd-century sarcophagus, see Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 337 f. For a match between the monumental arts and an extant ring, compare the ring on the left hand of the second lady-in-waiting behind Empress Theodora in the San Vitale procession mosaic with, for example, Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 6E.

<sup>18</sup> See Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 322.

<sup>19</sup> See also B. Segall, *Museum Benaki, Athens: Katalog der Goldschmiede-Arbeiten* (Athens, 1938), no. 256a.

<sup>20</sup> Ross, *Catalogue*, nos. 119, 126. Compare Henkel, *Fingerringe*, nos. 819 ff, for Roman friendship rings with similar bezels.

trothal rings, since that ceremonial act and the moral ideal evoked by that word would by then not yet have assumed their significance for the couple.<sup>21</sup>

The earliest type of Byzantine marriage ring, exemplified by a superb example in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection (Fig. 4: *Aristophanes-Ouigil[a]ntia*), is that whereon husband and wife, in bust portraits, face one another in full profile.<sup>22</sup> There are two basic bezel variants within the type, an inverted pyramid with a deeply cut retrograde device (Fig. 4), and a thin disc with a superficially cut direct device (Fig. 5 [detached bezel]);<sup>23</sup> the former—whereon the groom appears at the right, with his fibula on the “left” shoulder—was clearly intended for sealing, whereas the latter apparently was not. Both variants usually show a cross between the couple, but on the sealing version of this ring type the cross is always small, whereas on the non-sealing version it is usually large. Furthermore, the latter rings are characteristically lightweight and simply executed, whereas the former are usually heavy, very finely crafted, and occasionally personalized.

By the fourth century this type of marriage ring, sometimes with a cross or a Christian inscription,

was in common use in the West (Fig. 6: *Speratu[s]-Beneriae*).<sup>24</sup> The meaning of its composition is no more complex than it appears to be; much as these two figures formally complement one another within the compositional field they share, so they should be understood as complementing one another spiritually in the life they share. Not surprisingly, this formula, which was then also commonly used in the West for co-portraits of Sts. Peter and Paul, had a long history in Roman coinage.<sup>25</sup> For example, a medallion of ca. 257 (Fig. 7), inscribed *concordia augustorum*, shows Gallienus and Salonina face-to-face in a composition designed at once to evoke familial solidarity and imperial harmony.<sup>26</sup> When, as is often the case, an object or symbol appears between the two heads (e.g., a scepter, victory crown, or cross), the intention was simply to augment the solidarity concept by identifying that authority, reward, or belief that unites the pair.

The double-profile marriage ring was taken over by Byzantium from the West fully developed in design and meaning, and already adapted for a Christian clientele. Although the first extant eastern examples may date as early as the mid-fourth century,<sup>27</sup> the core of the sealing version of this ring type probably falls in the first decades of the fifth century. This is suggested by archaeological evidence associated with closely comparable rings discovered in the West, and by parallels between specific eastern rings (Fig. 4) and eastern coinage (Fig. 8: Eudocia, 423; Fig. 9: Theodosius II, 420).<sup>28</sup> The non-sealing version should probably be

<sup>21</sup> See Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 337–39. Although a *dextrarum iunctio* may have taken place in confirmation of the betrothal contract (Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 128), it most likely would have been between the parents.

<sup>22</sup> Figure 4 = Washington, D. C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 47.18. See Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 50. For others, which may be taken to be Byzantine by virtue of their findspots or inscriptions, see F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, “Anneaux,” *DACL* 1.2 (1924), fig. 678 (gold, with cross); O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities and Objects from the Christian East in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography of the British Museum* (London, 1901), no. 207 (gold, with cross [= our Fig. 10]); E. Dauterman Maguire, H. P. Maguire, and M. J. Duncan-Flowers, *Art and Holy Powers in the Early Christian House*, Illinois Byzantine Studies 2 (Urbana-Champaign, 1989), no. 83 (bronze, with cross); W. de Grüneisen, *Art chrétien primitif du haut et du bas moyen-âge* (Paris, n.d.), no. 460A (silver, with cross); de Ricci, *Catalogue*, no. 406A (silver, with cross: *Theodotis*); F. H. Marshall, *Catalogue of Finger Rings, Greek, Etruscan and Roman in the Department of Antiquities, British Museum* (London, 1907), no. 273 (gold, with cross [repoussé, with a child between the couple]); Ross, *Catalogue*, nos. 51, 52 (gold, with cross [no. 52 = our Fig. 5]); G. Vikan, *Byzantine Objects of Daily Life in the Menil Collection, Volume I* (forthcoming), no. R25 (bronze).

To this list may be added a one-sided, 5th-century Byzantine lead sealing at Dumbarton Oaks (Shaw no. 47.2.1971; unpublished), apparently made with such a marriage ring bezel.

<sup>23</sup> Figure 5 = Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 53.12.61. See Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 52; and for such a bezel still attached to its hoop, Cabrol and Leclercq, “Anneaux,” fig. 678.

<sup>24</sup> Figure 6 = London, British Museum. See Marshall, *Catalogue*, no. 208. For the appearance of this ring type in the West, see Henkel, *Fingerringe*, 337–39; M. Henig, *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites*, BAR British Series 8 (Oxford, 1978), no. 790; and Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 50. Many examples in a variety of media and bezel designs are known; most are signets, and inscriptions are common. Occasional examples (Henkel, *Fingerringe*, nos. 98, 99) show just a single profile bust, suggesting that such rings may have been made in pairs.

<sup>25</sup> See J. P. C. Kent, *Roman Coins* (New York, 1978), nos. 156, 188, 219, 258, 276, 351, 383, 389, 457, 480 (= our Fig. 7), 523, 578, 643, 707. For such double portraits of Peter and Paul, see F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, “Pierre (Saint),” *DACL* 14.1 (1939), figs. 10220–23, 10240, 10245.

<sup>26</sup> Figure 7 = London, British Museum. See Kent, *Coins*, no. 480.

<sup>27</sup> The Menil Collection bronze ring (see note 22, above), shows a male portrait strikingly like the amethyst intaglio portrait in Berlin usually taken to be Constantine I. See E. Zwieler-Diehl, *Antike Gemmen in deutschen Sammlungen. II, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Antikenabteilung, Berlin* (Munich, 1969), no. 545.

<sup>28</sup> Figures 8, 9 = London, British Museum. See, respectively, Kent, *Coins*, nos. 751, 744. For a summary of the western archaeological evidence, see Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 50.

placed more centrally in the fifth century, because it is clearly further removed from the Roman model, and the cross has come to dominate its field.<sup>29</sup> Following the evidence of imperial portraiture on the coinage, however, one would not expect the profile ring type to have continued much beyond the later fifth century.<sup>30</sup>

There is no question that the figures portrayed on the cruder, non-sealing version of this ring type are generic portraits only, evocative in a general way, by the jewelry that they wear, of people of high rank.<sup>31</sup> Representatives of the more luxurious, more expertly crafted signet version, however, seem to have a portrait-like specificity, and in the case of the finest surviving example, at Dumbarton Oaks, the figures are identified by name. Were these paired profiles intended to be realistic portrayals of Aristophanes and Vigilantia? Almost certainly not, since both are repeated virtually identically on an uninscribed gold marriage ring in the British Museum (Fig. 10),<sup>32</sup> and although Marvin Ross had suggested that these two rings might have been made for husband and wife, it is much more likely that they were simply products of the same Constantinopolitan(?) workshop or goldsmith—expensive stock items to be personalized on demand. In fact, very few marriage rings of this type—or, for that matter, of any other type from the period—bear identifying inscriptions, and yet many among them, including simple bronze examples, show striking similarities to well-known imperial portrait types.<sup>33</sup> The commonality of the rings in our Figures 4 and 10, therefore, would not be one of shared individual portraiture, but rather one of shared workshop technique, and of common dependency on familiar coin types. Indeed, this is the message of early Byzantine marriage art generally; namely, that coinage provided the ultimate models, both for basic iconographic concepts

and for specific figure types, from which such salient imperial elements as diadems and *pendilia* were usually deleted.<sup>34</sup>

Before moving on to the next common early Byzantine iconographic scheme for evoking marriage, mention should be made of the appearance of the double-profile marriage formula in two contexts other than rings. There are a number of stamped glass pendants of eastern Mediterranean manufacture bearing juxtaposed profile portraits of a man and a woman, in some cases separated by a small cross and in others, recalling the *vivas* inscription common on Roman marriage rings, by the word *zoe*.<sup>35</sup> Although this genre of object has pre-Christian roots, it was still in common use during the fifth century, when these specimens should be dated.<sup>36</sup> Although too few marriage pendants and necklaces survive to allow for the possibility that they once constituted a significant category of late antique jewelry in their own right, it is noteworthy that they are, in different forms, attested both earlier in the West (e.g., by a Piazza della Consolazione treasure necklace [Fig. 19]), and later in the East (e.g., by a Mersin treasure necklace [Fig. 18]).<sup>37</sup> But unlike rings, crowns, and belts, necklaces seem not to have had a designated role to play in the marriage ceremony.

Brief mention should also be made of two closely interrelated tiny silver boxes—one found in Thrace (Fig. 11: *homonoia*) and the other apparently in Cilicia—which bear juxtaposed male-

<sup>34</sup>The deletion of imperial regalia is especially obvious in the case of the Dumbarton Oaks and British Museum rings (Figs. 4, 8–10).

<sup>35</sup>An unpublished example with a small cross is preserved in the Corning Glass Museum (no. 59.1.205). For a *zoe* pendant, and one with neither cross nor inscription, see *Objects with Semitic Inscriptions, 1100 B.C.-A.D. 700 (and) Jewish, Early Christian and Byzantine Antiquities*, Zurich, L. Alexander Wolfe, and Frank Sternberg, Auktion XXIII (November 20, 1989, Zurich), nos. 288, 294.

<sup>36</sup>Although hundreds of such stamped glass pendants survive, mostly from the eastern Mediterranean region and North Africa, with pagan, early Christian, and Jewish iconography, the genre has received little scholarly attention. See J. Philippe, *Le monde byzantin dans l'histoire de la verrerie (V<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle)* Bologna, 1970), 37 f. Many specimens appear to have been amuletic in function; their continuity into the 5th century is attested by occasional examples with stylite saints or with the *Chrismon*.

<sup>37</sup>See *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, ed. K. Weitzmann (New York, 1979), no. 281; and A. Banck, *Byzantine Art in the Collections of the USSR* (Leningrad-Moscow, n.d.), no. 102 (and below). See also Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 66 (the Anastasius and Ariadne *solidus* at Dumbarton Oaks, mounted as a necklace clasp [= our Fig. 23]). For the late Roman counterpart, in cameo-carved jet, to these eastern glass marriage pendants, see Henig, *Corpus*, no. 759.

<sup>29</sup>The increasing dominance of the cross, from the early 5th into the 6th century, is a phenomenon traceable (for example) in Byzantine coinage and among Byzantine flat weights. For the former, see P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coins* (London, 1982), 4, 34–36; and for the latter, Vikan, *Menil Collection*, chap. 6.

<sup>30</sup>Grierson, *Coins*, 4. There are, however, Byzantine lead sealings datable to the 6th century bearing juxtaposed profiles of Sts. Peter and Paul separated by a small cross. See, e.g., G. Schlumberger, *Mélanges d'archéologie byzantine* (Paris, 1895), 299, no. 4.

<sup>31</sup>Note especially Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 51, where the bride's earrings and necklace are clearly discernible, as is the groom's elaborate fibula.

<sup>32</sup>Figure 10 = London, British Museum. See Dalton, *Catalogue*, no. 207; and Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 50.

<sup>33</sup>See note 27 above.

female profile portraits separated by a monumental jeweled cross.<sup>38</sup> Although the significance of their other decoration, and even their function, have never been satisfactorily explained, it should be clear from the dominant role of the double portraits and from the “concord” inscription on the Thracian box (cf. Fig. 12) that they were in some way connected with marriage, or at least with the joint action of a married couple.<sup>39</sup> In this respect they recall the much grander mid-fourth-century Roman casket of Proiecta from the Esquiline treasure, which, even if it does not include in its iconographic program the *domum deductio* of the Roman wedding as some had thought, nevertheless may justifiably be linked to the marriage ceremony, thanks to the paired frontal portraits of husband and wife on its lid and to the *vivatis in Christo* inscription just beneath it.<sup>40</sup> Kathleen Shelton has suggested that the casket, as a container for bath articles, was a gift to the bride, and that its imagery was chosen to reflect the traditional bride’s toilet, taken on the evening before the wedding.<sup>41</sup>

What was the function of the Thracian and Cilician boxes? Although traditionally, if sometimes unenthusiastically, identified as reliquaries, they would be, among extant reliquaries, unusually

small and early in date.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, their iconography would be unusual for that role, since in addition to paired marriage portraits, the Cilician box bears two votive(?) images of St. Konon accompanied by the word *hygia* (“health”) and an animal frieze incorporating patently apotropaic elements. Grabar found these features anomalous on a container intended for relics, but, not recognizing a possible marriage connection, he could suggest no alternative interpretation.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps these boxes—containing some relic-like apotropaica, or maybe rings—were specifically associated with the marriage ceremony, an event in which both the notion of “health” and the warding off of evil had significant roles to play (see below).<sup>44</sup>

Just as the profile soon substantially disappeared from Byzantine coinage, so also it disappeared from the bezels of Byzantine marriage rings. By the sixth century, paired frontal bust portraits (Fig. 12: *homonoia*, *Theou charis*) and variations on the *dextrarum iunctio* (see below) had become the standard iconographic formulae.<sup>45</sup> Nearly all surviving

<sup>38</sup>Figure 11 = Sofia, Narodni Muzej, no. 2519. It measures 2.9 × 4.5 × 3.0 cm. See H. Buschhausen, *Die spätromischen Metallschreine und frühchristlichen Reliquiare, I. Teil: Katalog*, WByzSt 11 (Vienna, 1971), no. B3; and for the Cilician box, now in Adana, no. B4. See also A. Grabar, “Un reliquaire provenant d’Isaurie,” *CahArch* 13 (1962), 49–59; and idem, “Un reliquaire provenant de Thrace,” *CahArch* 14 (1964), 59–65. These two boxes are so closely related to one another—and so unlike other silver containers of the period—as to indicate a common origin; because Thekla and Konon, both Isaurian saints, appear on the box now in Adana, which was apparently found in Cilicia (or Isauria), the two may be localized to that region of southeastern Asia Minor. See Grabar, “Isaurie,” 55 f.; and idem, “Thrace,” 65.

<sup>39</sup>Buschhausen, *Metallschreine*, 182, 185 f, 205 f, was closer to the mark in labeling these as “private donor portraits,” derived from imperial portrait types; he had difficulty, however, in reconciling his inappropriately early dating of the Thracian box—to the second quarter of the 4th century—with the dominant cross, and with his conviction that both boxes were made to be reliquaries (which then hardly existed). Grabar, on the other hand, correctly dated the boxes later (the Thracian box ca. 400, the Cilician box to the mid-5th century), but mistakenly identified the paired profiles as Constantine and Helen, overlooking the fact that the imperial diadems had been deleted from the coin models, and choosing to downplay the fact that no such iconographic formula for that pair of saints is known to have existed at such an early date.

<sup>40</sup>These two elements—paired frontal portraits and a *vivas in deo* inscription—are united on a contemporary marriage ring bezel preserved in Spalato. See O. Pelka, *Altchristliche Ehedenkmäler* (Strasbourg, 1901), 131, no. 50. For the iconography and function of the Proiecta casket, see K. J. Shelton, *The Esquiline Treasure* (London, 1981), 27 f.

<sup>41</sup>Shelton, *Treasure*, 28.

<sup>42</sup>Those few metal boxes of comparable size and date in which relics have been found seem to have been made significantly earlier than their outer protective containers, and quite possibly for other purposes. See Buschhausen, *Metallschreine*, nos. B19, B20, C12; and *Age of Spirituality*, nos. 568, 569.

<sup>43</sup>Grabar, “Isaurie,” 57 f. For closely comparable votive images in repoussé silver, see M. Mundell Mango, *Silver from Early Byzantium: The Kaper Koraon and Related Treasures* (Baltimore, 1986), 244.

<sup>44</sup>For a small, undecorated bronze box of the period discovered with a *phos-zoe* ring in it, see *Objects with Semitic Inscriptions*, no. 339; and for various textually and archaeologically attested uses for small boxes during this period, including as containers for jewelry, see J. Duffy and G. Vikan, “A Small Box in John Moschus,” *GRBS* 24.1 (1983), 93–99.

Several iconographic and stylistic elements of the Thracian and Cilician boxes (e.g., the profile marriage portraits, the Lamb of God, Christ Enthroned with Apostles) are paralleled on the bezels of a closely interrelated group of four luxurious gold rings, two of which are the near-twin marriage rings at Dumbarton Oaks and in the British Museum discussed above (Figs. 4, 10). For that group, which should be dated with the boxes to the first half of the 5th century, see G. Vikan, “Early Christian and Byzantine Rings in the Zucker Family Collection,” *JWalt* 45 (1987), 33, figs. 5–8. The repetition of juxtaposed profile portraits of Sts. Peter and Paul on the top and back of the Cilician box may have been intended to complement and reinforce the “concord” notion implicit in the double marriage portrait appearing on the box’s two ends.

<sup>45</sup>Figure 12 = Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 59.60. See Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 4E. For others, see Byzantium: *The Light in the Age of Darkness*, New York, Ariadne Galleries (November 2, 1988–January 31, 1989, New York), no. 39 (gold, with crowns: *homonoia*) (now in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto); Dalton, *Catalogue*, no. 133 (gold and niello, with Christ: *Theou* [?] *homonoia*); Grüneisen, *Art chrétien*, no. 456 (gold “bague reliquaire” [i.e., thick detached bezel]); P. Orsi, *Sicilia bizantina, I* (Rome, 1942), 158, fig. 73 (gold and niello, with

examples of the frontal portrait ring type are gold, although, unlike profile portrait rings, these exist primarily in just one version, with a series of interchangeable subordinate elements.

The typical frontal portrait ring is characterized by a thick, usually partially nielloed bezel soldered to a sturdy wire hoop. The round field of its non-sealing device is dominated by a flared-arm cross, flanked on the left by the groom and on the right by the bride; frequently a bust portrait of Christ appears just above the cross (Fig. 13: *homonoia*).<sup>46</sup> The exergue is reserved for an inscription, which will usually be the word *homonoia*; the upper and lower edges of the bezel may be inscribed as well, and this secondary inscription will usually be the phrase *Theou charis* ("grace of God"). Stylized marriage crowns are sometimes added, in the form of simple arcs or semicircles suspended over the heads of the bride and groom, even though in some cases (Fig. 13) the bride appears to be wearing a crown already. Two virtually identical bronze rings of this type (Fig. 14: *hygia*) stand somewhat apart from the core group by virtue of their medium, bezel shape, and relative cross size, and because their exergue bears the word "health."<sup>47</sup> The more characteristic gold examples, although subject to iconographic variations, are nevertheless closely interrelated through small details of style and technique; this suggests a common origin and a restricted chronology.<sup>48</sup> Their precious material, substantial weight, and generally fine craftsman-

ship indicate wealthy clients, though surprisingly, not one example of this ring type has been found with a personalized inscription.<sup>49</sup> The word *homonoia* suggests a role in marriage, to the exclusion of betrothal, and significant variations in hoop size presuppose use by both men and women.<sup>50</sup>

Although frontal bust portraits of the sort decorating the lid of the Proiecta casket were common among most categories of late Roman marriage-related art (e.g., sarcophagi, gold glass), they were not characteristic of Roman wedding rings.<sup>51</sup> In this case Byzantium seems to have arrived at the iconographic formula on its own, perhaps developing it directly from the western-derived profile type in its later, non-sealing variant, with the larger cross (Fig. 5).<sup>52</sup> But whatever its immediate origins, the core of the frontal portrait group clearly belongs in the later sixth to early seventh century. This is indicated by the ring design itself, whose thick disk bezel more typically bears a cross monogram, datable after ca. 540, by archaeological evidence associated with related rings and treasures (e.g., the Mersin treasure, discussed below), by the distinctive three-figure configuration of those bezel devices with Christ *en buste* (Fig. 13), which parallels Byzantine glass weights datable to the later sixth century (Fig. 15: *Euthaliou*), and by general similarities between those bezels without Christ (Figs. 12, 14) and coins and bronze weights issued during the reign of Justin II and Sophia (Fig. 16).<sup>53</sup>

crowns and Christ: *homonoia*); Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, Seyrig Collection, unpublished (bronze, with crowns: *hygia*); Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 67 (gold and niello, with crowns and Christ: *homonoia* [= our Fig. 13]); no. 68 (gold and niello, with Christ: *Theou charis*); J.-M. Spieser, "Collection Paul Canellopoulos (II)," *BCH* 96 (1972), no. 9 (gold, with dove: *homonoia*, *Theou charis* [= our Fig. 17]); no. 11 (gold [raised device]: *charis*); Toronto, the Royal Ontario Museum, no. 986.181.3, unpublished (gold, with Christ: *Theou homonoia*); Vikan, *Menil Collection*, no. R26 (bronze, with cross: *hygia* [= our Fig. 14]); idem, "Zucker," fig. 9 (gold [raised device]).

<sup>46</sup> Fig. 13 = Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 53.12.4. See Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 67.

<sup>47</sup> Figure 14 = Houston, Menil Collection, no. R26. See Vikan, *Menil Collection*, no. R26. Its unpublished twin, in the Cabinet des Médailles, is much better preserved; on it the crowns are clearly visible, as are the first three letters (*upsilon*, *gamma*, *iota*) of the word *hygia*, which is only faintly discernible in the exergue of the Menil ring.

<sup>48</sup> Orsi, *Sicilia bizantina*, I, 158, fig. 73 and Dalton, *Catalogue*, no. 133 are very much alike, as are Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 4E (= our Fig. 12), *Byzantium*, no. 39, and Spieser, "Canellopoulos," no. 9 (= our Fig. 17). Reputed findspots include Constantinople (Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 67), Beirut (Dalton, *Catalogue*, no. 133), and Sicily (Orsi, *Sicilia bizantina*, I, 158, fig. 73); this would suggest central dissemination of the ring type, if not the actual rings, from Constantinople.

<sup>49</sup> On the finer examples (Fig. 12) it is clear that the groom wears a *chlamys* with fibula and the bride a necklace and earrings.

<sup>50</sup> Compare, for example, Ross, *Catalogue*, nos. 4E, 68.

<sup>51</sup> For sarcophagi and gold glass, see F. Cabrol and H. Lelercq, "Mariage," *DACL* 10.2 (1932), figs. 7649, 7664, 7665, 7667, 7670. For a rare Roman ring bezel with frontal portraits, see Pelka, *Ehedenkmäler*, 131, no. 50.

<sup>52</sup> The Grüneisen ring bezel (*Art chrétien*, no. 456), with frontal busts flanking a large cross, is remarkably like the non-sealing profile version. Frontal imperial bust portraits (both male) separated by a small cross appeared in the East in the 5th century on bronze flat weights (see Dalton, *Catalogue*, no. 437), and a small cross appears between seated emperors on the coinage issued during the brief joint reign of Justin I and Justinian I (Grierson, *Coins*, pp. 2, 19); neither, however, appears directly to have inspired the ring bezels, whose compositions are quite different.

<sup>53</sup> Figure 15 = Houston, Menil Collection, no. GW12. See Vikan, *Menil Collection*, nos. GW9, GW12, and chap. 7. The rings closest in composition to the glass weights are those published by Dalton (*Catalogue*, no. 133) and Orsi (*Sicilia bizantina*, I, 158, fig. 73).

Figure 16 = Geneva, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire. See N. Dürr, "Catalogue de la collection Lucien Naville au cabinet de numismatique du Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève," *Genava* 12 (1964), no. 311; and Vikan, *Menil Collection*, chap. 6. For the coinage, see A. R. Bellinger, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection. Volume One, Anastasius I to Maurice*,

Although close interrelationships among the gold members of this group argue against a long tradition, a firm terminus ante quem for the type is difficult to fix, since striking compositional parallels exist between the bronze representatives and eighth-century coins and lead sealings.<sup>54</sup>

Concord is iconographically conveyed on these rings with the same directness and simplicity that it had been conveyed on the earlier profile rings. Moreover, this type too has compositional and thematic parallels in imperial iconography, as we have just seen. Justin II and Sophia are united on coins and bronze weights, evoking their imperial and familial unity, and although the figures represented on the glass weights are different from those on the rings—the emperor is above and the eparch of Constantinople and another high official below—their iconographic message is basically the same, for much as husband and wife complement one another in the domestic sphere under the uniting authority of Christ, so the two officials complement one another in the economic sphere under the uniting authority of the emperor. Iconographically, what distinguishes these rings from the earlier type, aside from the portraits, is their much greater emphasis on Christian imagery; specifically, the more prominent cross and the bust portrait of Christ.

Also iconographically distinctive to this ring type, but not specifically Christian, are the crowns that appear on about half the examples in the group (Fig. 13).<sup>55</sup> During the early Byzantine period crowns were essential ingredients in the marriage ceremony, and among the Orthodox they have remained so ever since.<sup>56</sup> Like most other as-

pects of the ceremony, the custom of crowning the bride and groom was taken over by the Byzantines from the Romans. The Roman marriage crown, made of flowers and sacred plants, was initially rejected by the church fathers—most notably Tertullian (*De corona*) and Clement of Alexandria—because of its superstitious associations.<sup>57</sup> But by the fourth century it was apparently in common use among Christians at both ends of the Mediterranean, signifying in a general way the spiritual triumph of a couple united in Christ—a notion that John Chrysostom developed further, making of the crowns the *symbolon tes nikes* (“symbol of victory”) of the bride and groom over sensual pleasure.<sup>58</sup> And although no Church requirement yet existed, it was becoming increasingly common for a priest to perform the crowning; indeed, when Emperor Maurice married the daughter of his predecessor Tiberius, it was the patriarch of Constantinople who put the wedding crowns in place.<sup>59</sup>

Crowns of various sorts, sometimes held by Christ or simply suspended in mid-air, appear prominently in the marriage iconography of fourth-century Rome, most notably on sarcophagi and in gold glass vessels.<sup>60</sup> Although they may approximate in their leafy appearance the crowns then used in the marriage ceremony, their iconographic role, like that of the figure holding them, was essentially symbolic.<sup>61</sup> In this respect they parallel the victory crown suspended in the hand of God over the head of the empress on contemporary coinage (e.g., Fig. 8),<sup>62</sup> and thus differ fundamentally from the real marriage crowns being set in place in the marriage miniatures of the twelfth-century Skylitzes chronicle (Fig. 1). The same applies to the schematic crowns on the bezels of sixth-century Byzantine marriage rings, which, like their counterparts in the Christian art of fourth-century Rome, may have symbolized a general sort of spiritual triumph or perhaps the more specific moral victory evoked by John Chrysostom. But in either case, they probably still were believed to carry a measure of that amuletic power ascribed to their pre-Christian counterparts. This is suggested by

491–602 (Washington, D.C., 1966), pl. LVIII. For the dating of this ring design (via the cross monogram), see Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 69; and Vikan, “Zucker,” 39; and for the related archaeological evidence, see Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 4E; and Dalton, *Catalogue*, no. 189. The motif of Christ *en buste* above a cross is paralleled on the ca. 600 pewter Holy Land flasks preserved at Monza and Bobbio. See A. Grabar, *Les ampoules de Terre Sainte* (Paris, 1958), *passim*.

<sup>54</sup>See Grierson, *Coins*, pl. 17, 302; and G. Zacos and A. Veglery, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Basel, 1972), no. 260.

<sup>55</sup>Marriage crowns, as distinct from whatever secular headgear bride or groom might wear, do not appear on rings of the profile portrait type already discussed, and they are very rare on the *dextrarum iunctio* rings which will be considered next. Although in a few instances among rings of the latter category, Christ (or Christ with the Virgin) appears to be touching the heads of the couple (Figs. 25, 26), in no case can it be seen that a crown is being set in place.

<sup>56</sup>See Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 95 f, 136 f; K. Baus, *Der Kranz in Antike und Christentum*, Theophaneia: Beiträge zur Religions- und Kirchengeschichte des Altertums (Bonn, 1940), 93–109; and note 3 above.

<sup>57</sup>See Baus, *Kranz*, 99, 100; and Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 95.

<sup>58</sup>See Baus, *Kranz*, 101; Reekmans, “La ‘dextrarum iunctio,’” 69–77; Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt,” 8; and Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 95, 136 (PG 62, col. 546).

<sup>59</sup>See Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 136 f (Theophylaktos Simokattes).

<sup>60</sup>See Cabrol and Leclercq, “Mariage,” figs. 7647, 7662, 7664, 7665; Reekmans, “La ‘dextrarum iunctio,’” 69–77; and, for a ring with suspended crowns, Henkel, *Fingerringe*, no. 404.

<sup>61</sup>See Reekmans, “La ‘dextrarum iunctio,’” 69–77; and Reinsberg, “Concordia,” 315 f.

<sup>62</sup>See Kent, *Coins*, no. 727 (etc.).

a passage from the Psalms (5:12), "Thou hast crowned us with a shield of favor," inscribed on two seventh-century Byzantine *dextrarum iunctio* marriage rings which will be discussed below—rings whose bezels show Christ between the bride and groom, raising his hands to the tops of their heads as if touching, placing, or blessing crowns.

We have already seen that inscriptions—names and a variety of good wishes—were common on both pagan and Christian marriage rings of the late Roman period in the West; they were rare, however, on the early profile type of Byzantine marriage ring. It is only with the later, frontal portrait type that words appear as a major ingredient on Byzantine marriage rings. Specifically, there are three different inscriptions characteristic of the group, one of which is traditional and two innovative. The traditional inscription, in the exergue of most of the rings, is the word *homonoia* or "concord," which was likely derived directly from the familiar Roman evocation of (and personification for) unity of mind and purpose, *concordia*.<sup>63</sup> *Homonoia* might be applied to a political or dynastic alliance, or to a simple private marriage, but however simple the alliance, its meaning for the married couple was at once specific and profound, since for them "concord" was a succinct statement of the prevailing late antique moral code governing their relationship.<sup>64</sup> Most clearly articulated by the Stoics, the belief was that one's wife was no longer a piece of expendable property, she was a lifelong companion and friend. Thus marriage, now for the first time based on the idea of the couple, was meant to be a durable state of affection between two honorable, civic-minded individuals. To this extent there is no distinction to be drawn

between a Christian couple of the sixth century and a pagan couple of the second, for as defined in the *Digest* of Justinian, "Marriage is a union of a man and woman and a consortium for an entire lifetime. . . ." <sup>65</sup> But among the Romans a harmonious lifelong union was viewed as a personal achievement, whereas in Byzantium matrimonial *homonoia* could only be achieved through divine grace. Novel 26 of Leo VI, summarizing the spirit of Justinian's Novel 22, makes this explicit by characterizing marriage as "a most important and valuable gift, granted by God the creator, to man."<sup>66</sup>

Byzantium's additions to the traditional Roman formula of frontal bust portraits convey this shift in emphasis in the clearest possible terms. The large, ubiquitous cross is one telling addition, the coupling on a few rings of the genitive *Theou* with *homonoia* ("concord of God") another, and the appearance of the bust of Christ over the cross on many rings yet another. But the most direct statement of Byzantium's modification of the old Stoic ideal comes in the innovative inscription shared by nearly half these rings: *Theou charis*. The state of marital concord evoked in traditional terms by the paired portraits and the word "concord" can now be understood only as something available to mankind solely through the "grace of God."<sup>67</sup>

An iconographically unique ring (Fig. 17: *homonoia*, *Theou charis*), though one still clearly belonging to the frontal portrait type, at once corroborates and refines this interpretation.<sup>68</sup> Basically it re-

<sup>63</sup> See H. Zwicker, "Homonoia," *RE* 8 (1913), 2256–69; and Reinsberg, "Concordia," 312–17. Although the Greek word *homonoia*, in the sense of the Latin *concordia*, had a long tradition on eastern Mediterranean coinage, and occurs occasionally as well on pre-Christian Greek marriage rings (with the motif of joined hands), its appearance here, in 6th-century Byzantium, likely owes its immediate inspiration to the pervasive western *concordia* marriage tradition of the later Roman period (which was in turn dependent on the earlier Stoic *homonoia* tradition). For the coinage, see Zwicker, "Homonoia," 2268; and for the rings, Henkel, *Fingerringe*, no. 222; and Henig, *Corpus*, app. 30.

The *homonoia* inscription with bride, groom, and cross is documentable for the first time in the East in the 5th century, with the Thracian silver box discussed above (Fig. 11). The close relationship of this box's iconography to that of contemporary profile marriage rings suggests that the word *homonoia* may, at that period, have entered the eastern marriage art tradition via (now lost) rings of that type.

<sup>64</sup> See *A History of Private Life, I: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. P. Veyne (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1987), 33–47 (P. Veyne).

<sup>65</sup> *Dig.* 23.2.1; see *The Digest of Justinian*, trans. A. Watson (Philadelphia, 1985), II, 657. For the continuity of this definition into the late Byzantine period, see P. D. Viscuso, *A Byzantine Theology of Marriage: The "Syntagma kata stoicheion" of Matthew Blastares*, Ph.D. dissertation (Catholic University, 1988), 71 f. For a more general overview of the continuity from pagan to Christian marriage, see D. Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), chap. 1.

<sup>66</sup> See *Les Nouvelles de Léon VI*, ed. and trans. P. Noailles and A. Dain (Paris, 1944), Novel 26.

<sup>67</sup> See Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt," 8–11. A comparable transformation from pagan to Christian values occurred on Byzantine bronze flat weights during the same period. Around 400, paired imperial portraits flank a *tyche* to evoke the idea that the empire's prosperity depends on harmonious co-rulership legitimized by the *polis*; by the later 5th century a cross has replaced the *tyche*, implying that divine sanction is now preeminent; and in the 6th century imperial imagery is usually dispensed with altogether, its place taken by a large cross and, quite often, by *Theou charis*. By then it was only through the "grace of God" that honest commerce could be guaranteed, for in the face of chronic dishonesty in the marketplace, the state had been forced to resort to depositing a standard set of weights in the largest church of the city. See Vikan, *Menil Collection*, chap. 6.

<sup>68</sup> Figure 17 = Athens, Canellopoulos Museum. See Spieser, "Canellopoulos," no. 9.

peats the iconographic configuration of the Dumbarton Oaks ring illustrated in Figure 12, but *Theou charis* has been shifted to the exergue with the *homonoia* inscription, and a bird with a branch in its beak has been placed above the cross. This seemingly incongruous addition (or substitution, for Christ) is in fact a subtle visual quotation from a popular early Christian salvation scene in which a dove returns to the Ark with an olive branch, confirming to Noah and his family that they have been spared from the flood (Gen. 8:10, 11).<sup>69</sup> In this respect the bird symbolizes hope, salvation, and more important here, divine grace.

The other innovative inscriptional element, supplanting *homonoia* on the two bronze rings in the group (Fig. 14 [much worn]), is *hygia*. Is it simply a banal good wish of the sort evoked at all weddings, even now—the Byzantine equivalent of the Roman wedding acclamation *feliciter*—or did it carry a more specific meaning, comparable to *homonoia* and *Theou charis*? The word “health,” in various forms (*hygia*, *hygieia*, *hygienousa phori*, *hygienon chro*), sometimes coupled with other words (*hygia-zoe*, *hygia-chara*), or occasionally personalized (*hygia Ioannou*), appears on a variety of early Byzantine artifacts. On commercial stamps and on water buckets for use in the baths, the intention seems simply to have been to convey a good wish to the consumer or user, whereas belts and rings bearing the word “health” might reasonably be taken to be so inscribed for amuletic purposes—which was undoubtedly the intention when *hygia* appears, as it occasionally does, on earthen pilgrim tokens from holy shrines and on medico-magical armbands used by women to treat gynecological ailments.<sup>70</sup> The fact that the word appears here on an object worn on the body suggests, *prima facie*, a high level of intentionality, but even if this were so, *hygia*’s po-

tential amuletic role in relation to marriage is not immediately apparent.

Dioscorus of Aphroditto, in his “Epithalamium for Paul and Patricia” (ca. 566), seems to be using the notion of health on its most banal, least intentional level when he wishes the couple “a life without illness.”<sup>71</sup> But in his “Epithalamium for Isakios,” his poetry turns to the more serious topic of demons and magic:

Soon you shall see children on your lap, sweeter than nectar, loved for their beauty—a blessing that your troubles have merited, as you do honor to the ability of your forebears. Go away, evil eye; this marriage is graced by God. . . .<sup>72</sup>

Isakios’ marriage is “graced by God” toward the proper goal of every marriage: procreation.<sup>73</sup> And this, too, is a concern at the heart of Justinian’s Novel 22, whose summary by Leo VI was already quoted in part above:

Marriage is a most important and valuable gift, granted by God the creator, to man. For not only does it give aid to nature exhausted by death, not allowing the human species, devoured by death, to disappear entirely, but also it gives men great joy in another way, thanks to the children born to it.<sup>74</sup>

The paramount importance of the reproductive aspect of Byzantine marriage, evoked in Dioscorus’ epithalamium and in Novel 26, reappears in even clearer terms in the opening statement of Novel 2 of Justin II, which restored divorce by mutual consent: “There is nothing more honored by men than marriage, from which result children, the succession of future generations, the peopling of villages and towns, and the creation of good polity.”<sup>75</sup> The operative principle of this legislation is that an unhappy marriage—one corrupted by “irrational hatred” (*alogon misos*)—necessarily renders impossible the central goal of marriage, childbearing, and therefore can be dissolved by mutual consent, divorce being an effective treatment for the

<sup>69</sup> For a ring with both dove and Ark on its bezel, see R. Garrucci, *Storia della arte cristiana* (Prado, 1880), pl. 478, 10, and for other parallels, pls. 477, 478; Dalton, *Catalogue*, pls. I, II; T. Klauser, “Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der christlichen Kunst, IV,” *JbAC* 4 (1961), 141, 142; and Vikan, “Zucker,” 33, fig. 5.

<sup>70</sup> For the stamps and buckets, see Vikan, *Menil Collection*, S120 and chap. 5; and M. Mundell Mango, C. Mango, A. Care Evans, and M. Hughes, “A 6th-century Mediterranean Bucket from Bromeswell Parish, Suffolk,” *Antiquity* 63, 239 (1989), 295–311. For a relevant belt fitting and some *hygia* rings, see *The Malcove Collection*, ed. S. D. Campbell (Toronto, 1985), no. 107 (*hygienon chro*); and Dalton, *Catalogue*, nos. 149–52. For the pilgrim tokens and the armbands, see G. Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium,” *DOP* 38 (1984), 69 f, 75 f (and for a doctor’s instrument case and a doctor’s pill stamp so inscribed, pp. 66, 69 f).

<sup>71</sup> See L. S. B. MacCoull, *Dioscorus of Aphroditto: His Work and His World* (Berkeley, 1988), 81 f.

<sup>72</sup> MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 111.

<sup>73</sup> The following discussion of the impact of demographic exigencies on Byzantine marriage poetry, morality, and law—and ultimately, on Byzantine marriage art—owes much to a paper entitled “Byzantine Models of Marriage” delivered by Angeliki Laiou at Dumbarton Oaks in 1985, and to Judith Herrin’s paper in the 1989 Dumbarton Oaks Spring Symposium, entitled “Divorce.” Special thanks are due to both scholars for kindly allowing me to read their papers in typescript. See also Patlagean, *Pauvreté*, chap. 4.

<sup>74</sup> See note 66 above.

<sup>75</sup> Zepos, *Jus*, I, 3–4, 75 (A.D. 566).

disruptive force of that "mischievous demon" (*skaïos daimon*) afflicting the couple.<sup>76</sup> Similarly, marriages rendered childless as a consequence of, among other things, homosexuality, impotence, or disease (leprosy) could be terminated by divorce.<sup>77</sup> This means, in effect, that a successful, fruitful marriage would be one blessed with both harmony and good health, the one being no less essential than the other. It is in this spirit that Dioscorus of Aphroditos ends his "Epithalamium for Paul and Patricia":

Give Paul a pleasant and happy marriage with Patricia, a life quite without illness. . . . Paul and beloved Patricia. . . . Give them the . . . of indissoluble harmony, as they hold children on their laps, and a bright and peaceful life, worthy of poetic praise. . . .<sup>78</sup>

In a society suffering from high infant mortality, an alarming morbidity rate among young women, and a chronic labor shortage—in a society to which God had given marriage to insure its very survival—the words *hygia* and *homonoia*, as invocations of amuletic (i.e., birth-facilitating) power from God, could be viewed as both complementary and inscriptionally interchangeable.<sup>79</sup> And as for the linking of magic with marriage, that bond is as old and intimate as the bond linking magic with childbirth.<sup>80</sup> The date of the Roman wedding was chosen to avoid certain unlucky days, the ring finger was chosen for its supposed connection with the heart, the entrails of an animal were examined to discover the marriage omens, crowns were worn to ward off danger, ribald songs were sung to avert the evil eye, and the bride was carried over the threshold, according to some, to avoid an unlucky first step. The passage from Dioscorus adjuring the evil eye, the *hygia* inscription, and the excerpt from Psalm 5 invoking a "shield of favor," suggest that at least some of the superstitious flavor of the

pagan marriage ceremony survived into Byzantine times. More such evidence will emerge below.

Before proceeding to the last major category of early Byzantine marriage iconography, brief mention should be made of the appearance of the frontal portrait formula outside the context of rings. In the late nineteenth century a treasure of gold jewelry was discovered near Mersin, in Cilicia. Now in Leningrad, it includes, among various earrings, rings, bracelets, belt fittings, and necklaces characteristic of the later sixth to early seventh century, an unusual pendant necklace with a large repoussé medallion of an emperor being crowned, and twenty repoussé links bearing identical frontal bust portraits of a man and woman separated by a cross, with *hygia* in the exergue (Fig. 18).<sup>81</sup> N. P. Kondakov, in his 1896 publication of the treasure, identified the pair as "emperor and empress?," whereas André Grabar, in his extensive study of this necklace in the 1951 *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, labeled them as Sts. Constantine and Helen, while acknowledging that no contemporary visual evidence could be cited as corroboration, and apparently overlooking the fact that neither wears the appropriate imperial headgear.<sup>82</sup> But clearly, the links' "concord" male-female composition and *hygia* inscription are much more appropriately associated with contemporary marriage iconography (Figs. 12, 14).<sup>83</sup> Highly plausible on its face, this interpretation is rendered more attractive by the presence in the Mersin treasure of a marriage ring and, more important, by the fact that Grabar had already concluded, primarily on the basis of the large medallion, that this necklace fulfilled some magical function.<sup>84</sup> In this respect it recalls the Piazza della Consolazione marriage necklace in the

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 3–5.

<sup>77</sup> Causes for divorce are enumerated in Justinian's Novels 117 and 134, and in the *Ecloga* of A.D. 741 (references from Herrin, "Divorce").

<sup>78</sup> MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 81 f.

<sup>79</sup> For an overview of the mortality issue, see A. Laiou, "Family, Byzantium," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. J. R. Strayer, 4 (1984), 595 f. E. Kitzinger ("Reflections on the Feast Cycle in Byzantine Art," *CahArch* 36 [1988], 72 note 71), apparently unaware of Byzantine marriage legislation and *hygia* rings, failed to recognize the inherently complementary nature of concord and health in his analysis of Byzantine marriage ring iconography.

<sup>80</sup> For superstitious elements in the Roman marriage, see M. Johnston, *Roman Life* (Glenview, Illinois, 1957), 132–37; and for magic and childbirth in late Antiquity, see Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic," 76–84.

<sup>81</sup> See N. Kondakov, *Russkie klady. Izslédovanie drevnostej velikoknjazeshago perioda* (St. Petersburg, 1896), 187–91; A. Grabar, "Un médaillon en or provenant de Mersine en Cilicie," *DOP* 6 (1951); Banck, *Byzantine Art*, nos. 102–5, 107; Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 4; and B. Deppert, "Early Byzantine Jewelry, Fourth to Seventh Century A.D.," *Byzantine Jewelry*, ed. D. Content (forthcoming), section XII. This treasure is datable by virtue of the cross monogram borne by one of its belt tabs, and because of its general stylistic and typological similarities with other treasures datable through coin finds.

Figure 18 = Leningrad, State Hermitage Museum, no. omega 107–8. See Banck, *Byzantine Art*, no. 102; and for a line drawing, Kondakov, *Russkie klady*, fig. 101.

<sup>82</sup> Kondakov, *Russkie klady*, 187 f; and Grabar, "Un médaillon," 29 f.

<sup>83</sup> Spieser ("Canellopoulos," no. 9) and Deppert ("Jewelry," section XII) both noted the similarity between these link medallions and contemporary marriage rings.

<sup>84</sup> See Grabar, "Un médaillon," 46.

Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fig. 19) which, although western and earlier, combines in its two pendants traditional marriage iconography and magic.<sup>85</sup> In this case the larger, gold pendant bears the marriage imagery—profile portraits of husband and wife about to be crowned—and the magic comes in the form of a smaller, hematite pendant, a Greco-Egyptian gem amulet bearing the so-called Abrasax, a snake-legged solar deity with the head of a rooster.<sup>86</sup> Although this creature was believed to wield multivalent powers, the material into which its image is cut, hematite, was valued in late Antiquity above all for its supposed styptic quality, verified by the red powder produced when this lustrous black mineral of iron oxide is crushed.<sup>87</sup> Hematite and blood control, in the sense of uterine bleeding, were key ingredients in contemporary medical magic, and here, under the umbrella of marriage, this amuletic power may have been invoked as a protective aid in childbearing—specifically, as an antidote to the uterine bleeding symptomatic of miscarriage.<sup>88</sup>

“Sts. Constantine and Helen” or “Sts. Peter and Paul” are the labels conventionally applied by antiquities dealers to the stamped earthen discs with paired frontal portraits (Fig. 20) which formed the major part of a hoard of several hundred “pilgrim tokens” recently dispersed on the international art market.<sup>89</sup> According to the dealers’ explanation, the figures are shown flanking a cross because these objects were issued by Emperor Heraclius in celebration of his returning the True Cross to Jerusalem. However, that the bust to the left is slightly larger than the other argues against the possibility that they might be Peter and Paul, and the absence of contemporary visual parallels or distinguishing imperial regalia militates against an

identification with Constantine and Helen. Additionally, it is important to be clear as to what these objects are, for as stamped earthen tokens they belong to a familiar category of late antique artifact—the earthen *eulogia* (“blessing”)—which has been shown to be characteristically amuletic in its intended function and often specifically medicinal in its desired effect.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, while many such tokens, like those showing St. Symeon Stylites the Younger, may be linked through their iconography to specific pilgrimage shrines, others, like those showing Christ *en buste*, the Virgin and Child, or the word “Solomon” with a coiled serpent (Fig. 21), were apparently topographically anonymous, and therefore, in effect, simply portable bits of sacred magic.<sup>91</sup> The same is likely true of the paired bust tokens, which are functionally as well as iconographically equivalent to the Mersin treasure necklace links (Fig. 18) and the bronze *hygia* marriage rings (Fig. 14), insofar as the amuletic invocation of “health” conveyed with an inscribed word on the necklace and rings is conveyed on the tokens with their very substance.<sup>92</sup> One form of magic was to be worn and the other, presumably, to be consumed, as we know Symeon tokens were, either powdered and rubbed on the body or, more rarely, taken internally with water.<sup>93</sup>

How, finally, might a *hygia* marriage ring or necklace, or an earthen *eulogia* marriage token with health-giving properties, have exercised its powers to enhance the couple’s chances for successful procreation? Hematite, as we have seen, was used to control bleeding (here, presumably, miscarriage), and other contemporary Byzantine amulets for women were used to induce “calm” in the uterus; indeed, one category bears an incantation addressed directly to the *hystera* (“womb”), accusing that “dark and black one” of “coiling like a serpent, hissing like a dragon, and roaring like a lion,” and then admonishing it to “lie down like a lamb.”<sup>94</sup> Why? One first assumes that this calmness would enhance the organ’s fertility (or at least, discourage dysmenorrhea), and that was probably, on some level, the intention. But it is also true that the “wandering womb” was believed to be the

<sup>85</sup> Figure 19 = New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1958, no. 58.12. See *Age of Spirituality*, no. 281.

<sup>86</sup> On the Abrasax, see C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor, 1950), chap. 9.

<sup>87</sup> See Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic,” 81. Comparable powers were attributed to heliotrope (red-flecked green calcedony), which may in fact be the material of this gem amulet. See *Age of Spirituality*, no. 281 (wherein this gem is labeled “hematite”), and no. 398 (an anti-hemorrhaging amulet with Christian iconography also labeled “hematite” but likely heliotrope).

<sup>88</sup> See *ibid.*, 83.

<sup>89</sup> Figure 20 = Baltimore, the Walters Art Gallery, nos. TL90.9.1, 2, 3, unpublished. For published tokens from this hoard, which in addition to the present iconographic type includes a type comprising a Greek cross with what appear to be the letters for *nike* (“victory”) between its arms, see *Objects with Semitic Inscriptions*, no. 172. For the early Byzantine appearance of such a formula (specifically, on bread stamps), see G. Galavaris, *Bread and the Liturgy* (Madison, 1970), 72–76.

<sup>90</sup> See Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic,” 67–73, 81–83.

<sup>91</sup> Figure 21 = Paris, Robert-Henri Bautier Collection. See Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic,” 81 f (notes 109–15).

<sup>92</sup> Some Symeon tokens are inscribed with the word *hygia*, and Symeon’s *Vita* makes it abundantly clear that this is how they were used. See Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic,” fig. 2, 68–73.

<sup>93</sup> See Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic,” 69 f.

<sup>94</sup> See *ibid.*, 77 f.

source of both physical and emotional malcontent in a woman.<sup>95</sup> A magical papyrus text of sixth- to seventh-century date recommended to treat “the ascent of the uterus” (*pros metras anadromen*) makes this explicit:

I conjure you, O Womb, [by the] one established over the Abyss . . . that you return again to your seat, and that you do not turn [to one side] into the right part of the ribs, or into the left part of the ribs, and that you do not gnaw into the heart like a dog, but remain indeed in your own intended and proper place, not chewing [as long as] I conjure by the one who, in the beginning, made the heaven and earth and all that is therein. Hallelujah! Amen!

Write this on a tin tablet and ‘clothe’ it in 7 colors.<sup>96</sup>

Like the *anularius*, via its special nerve, the uterus, by virtue of its ability to “wander,” was believed to have direct access to the heart, though not for good but for evil. A uterus in place was one in a state of “health,” and accordingly more effective for procreation, but a uterus in place was also one that could not “gnaw at the heart,” and thus could not, one may assume, create in the heart that irrational hatred (*alogon misos*) which, as effectively as any illness, could inhibit procreation. Thus again, the words *homonoia* and *hygia*, under the umbrella of marriage, could at once be complementary and amuletic.

More or less contemporaneously with the frontal bust portrait type appeared yet another formula for evoking marriage, featuring three (rarely four) standing figures, with the groom on the left, the bride on the right, and between and slightly behind them, Christ (Fig. 22).<sup>97</sup> Unlike the other two

ring types, this one evokes an action, but although the *dextrarum iunctio* is usually taken to be that action, only about a third of these rings actually show the bride and groom clasping hands. On the others, they either approach one another under the guidance of Christ (Fig. 24: *euchi*), or stand frontally, slightly apart, as if being presented or crowned by Christ (Fig. 25: *homonoia*)—or, more rarely, by Christ and the Virgin (Fig. 26: *homonoia*).<sup>98</sup> The groom appears to be wearing a tunic and *chlamys* with fibula, and the bride a long robe, sometimes with a veil—presumably the *flammeum* of the Roman ceremony.<sup>99</sup> The spiked headgear that she wears on a few rings and, with the veil, on the Dumbarton Oaks marriage belt (Fig. 31), is probably just a residual feature carried over from the coin models upon which this iconographic type depends.<sup>100</sup> As evidence of this, one may cite two

<sup>95</sup> See A. A. Barb, “*Diva metrix*,” *JWarb* 16 (1953), 193–238 (esp. 214 note 23); and Bonner, *Amulets*, 90.

<sup>96</sup> *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, ed. H. D. Betz (Chicago-London, 1986), 123 f (*Papyri graecae magicae*, VII.260–71).

<sup>97</sup> Figure 22 = Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 61.3. See Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 66. For other such rings, see A. Banck, “Dva vizantiiskikh zolotykh perstnia iz sobraniia Ermitazha,” *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha. Kul'tura i iskusstvo narodov vostoka* 6 (1961), 31–39 (see also, Banck, *Byzantine Art*, nos. 103b, 106c) (no. 103b = gold, Christ draws the couple together: *homonoia*); no. 106c = gold, niello, and set stones, octagonal hoop, Christ presents the couple: *homonoia*, Psalm 5:12); J. Boardman and D. Scarisbrick, *The Ralph Harari Collection of Finger Rings* (London, 1977), no. 115 (gold, octagonal hoop, Christ presents the couple, crowns: *homonoia*); *Byzantium*, no. 41 (gold [detached bezel], Christ presents the couple, crowns: *homonoia*); Cabrol and Leclercq, “Mariage,” fig. 7685 (gold, Christ draws the couple together: *homonoia*); C. Cecchelli, “L'anello bizantino del Museo di Palermo,” *Miscellanea Guillaume de Jerphanion* = *OCP* 13 (1947), 40–57 (gold, niello, and set stones, octagonal hoop with *locus sanctus* scenes, Christ presents the couple: Psalm 5:12); Dalton, *Catalogue*, nos. 129–32 (no. 129 = gold, niello, and set stones, octagonal hoop with *locus*

*sanctus* scenes, Christ and the Virgin bless the couple: *homonoia*; no. 130 = gold and niello, octagonal hoop, Christ draws the couple together: *homonoia*, John 14:27; no. 131 = gold, niello, and set stones, octagonal hoop, Christ blesses the couple: *homonoia*, *Theotoko boethei amen* [= our Fig. 25]; no. 132 = gold, niello, and set stones, octagonal hoop, Christ blesses the couple: *homonoia*, John 14:27); O. M. Dalton, *Byzantine Art and Archaeology* (Oxford, 1911), 545 (gold and niello: John 14:27); de Ricci, *Catalogue*, nos. 822, 845, 848, 861 (no. 822 = gold, *dextrarum iunctio*?; no. 845 = gold, *dextrarum iunctio*?; no. 848 = gold, *dextrarum iunctio*; no. 861 = gold, *dextrarum iunctio*); C. Kondoleon and A. Gonosová, *The Art of Late Rome and Byzantium: A Catalogue of the Collection of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts* (forthcoming), acc. no. 66.37.7 (gold, octagonal hoop, Christ presents the couple: *homonoia*); Ross, *Catalogue*, nos. 64–66, 69 (no. 64 = gold, *dextrarum iunctio*; no. 65 = gold, *dextrarum iunctio*?; no. 66 = gold, *dextrarum iunctio* [= our Fig. 22]; no. 69 = gold, niello, and set stones, octagonal hoop with *locus sanctus* scenes, Christ and the Virgin bless the couple: *homonoia*, *Kyrie boethi tous doulous sou Petrous Theodotis*, John 14:27 [= our Fig. 26]); Vikar, “Zucker,” 34 f, figs. 10, 11 (fig. 10 = gold, Christ draws the couple together: *euchi* [= our Fig. 24]; fig. 11 = gold, octagonal hoop, Christ blesses the couple: *homonoia*, *Theotoko boethe Georgi[ou] Plakelas*); W. F. Volbach, *Mittelalterliche Bildwerke aus Italien und Byzanz. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin: Bildwerke des Kaiser Friedrich-Museums* (Berlin-Leipzig, 1930), no. 6810 (gold and niello, octagonal hoop, Christ blesses the couple?: *Theotoko boethe Meaele*? [Melane?] *amen*).

<sup>98</sup> Figure 24 = Baltimore, The Walters Art Gallery, Zucker Family Collection, no. TL10.1985.048. See Vikar, “Zucker,” 34 f. Figure 25 = London, British Museum. See Dalton, *Catalogue*, no. 131. Figure 26 = Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 47.15. See Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 69.

<sup>99</sup> See Carcopino, *Rome*, 81; and compare Reinsberg, “Concordia,” fig. 130 (the so-called *pronuba* sarcophagus, whereon the bride wears the wedding veil).

<sup>100</sup> In his discussion of the Dumbarton Oaks marriage belt (*Catalogue*, no. 38), Ross rightly observed that the trace of an imperial diadem on the bride “indicates an imperial prototype” (e.g., a commemorative coin or medallion from an imperial wedding). But contrast the over-interpretation of this vestigial headgear by L. M. Fuchs, in “The Gold Marriage Belt at Dumbarton Oaks,” *BSCAstr* 13 (1987), 22 f. See also Kitzinger, “Reflections,” 72 note 72, for remarks on the seeming imbalance

items from an early Byzantine treasure from Trebizond at Dumbarton Oaks: a marriage *solidus* of Anastasius and Ariadne set as a necklace clasp (Fig. 23) and a marriage ring whose bezel bears what is apparently its copy (Fig. 22).<sup>101</sup> While the groom on the ring has been stripped of Anastasius' imperial diadem, the bride, quite inappropriately, has retained from Ariadne's portrait both diadem and *pendilia*. Just two rings in this group show marriage crowns, which, hovering over the couple's heads, match those more frequently encountered on frontal portrait rings. And finally, three closely interrelated representatives of this type, including that at Dumbarton Oaks illustrated in Figure 26, bear tiny *locus sanctus* Christological scenes on the faceted surfaces of their octagonal hoops.

There are as many known rings of this type (about two dozen examples) as there are of the other two types put together. All are gold, none seems to have been designed for sealing, about a third bear some inlaid niello, and on most of those, the garments of the bride and groom are (or were) inset with semiprecious stones (Figs. 25, 26).<sup>102</sup> Well over half are inscribed on the exergue of the bezel (with *homonoia* or, in one case, *euchi*), and many bear secondary inscriptions as well (an invocation, John 14:27 or Psalm 5:12), either on the faceted surface of the hoop or, more rarely, on the rim of the hoop or the bezel. About half have octagonal hoops, and about as many either a round or an oval disk bezel; others have conical bezels or square bezels with projecting lobes. There is much greater variety in design, iconography, and style among these marriage rings than among the others, even though there are closely interrelated subgroups in the series, most notably that associated with the three octagonal rings bearing *locus sanctus* scenes.<sup>103</sup>

between the bride's elaborate headgear on some of these rings and the simpler, usually indistinct headgear of the groom. He also implies, quite rightly, that most of these seemingly "imperial" rings (e.g., our Fig. 22) are by their light weight and lack of technical sophistication unlikely candidates for imperial patronage.

<sup>101</sup> Figure 23 = Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 59.47. See Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 66 (for both objects).

<sup>102</sup> See Banck, "Zolotykh," 35–39 (a ring inset with an emerald and a garnet).

<sup>103</sup> Included in that subgroup are the three *locus sanctus* rings (Cecchelli, "L'anello," 40–57; Dalton, *Catalogue*, no. 129; and Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 69), as well as Dalton, *Catalogue*, no. 132, and Banck, *Byzantine Art*, no. 106c. Also closely related is an octagonal *locus sanctus* ring without explicit marriage iconography in the Walters Art Gallery. See P. Verdier, "An Early Christian Ring with a Cycle of the Life of Christ," *The Bulletin of The Walters Art Gallery* 11.3 (1958).

Although the terminus post quem for this iconographic type may be fixed at ca. 450, with the first documented appearance in the East of the *dextrarum iunctio* showing Christ as a symbolic *pronubus* on a coin type issued to commemorate the marriage of Marcian and Pulcheria (Fig. 27),<sup>104</sup> most of the surviving representatives of the type should be assigned to the seventh century. This is suggested by the fact that one of the three octagonal *locus sanctus* rings, which by its weight alone (23.1 grams) presupposes an important owner, was reliably reported to have been part of a treasure found near Syracuse, where Constans II resided with his court from 663 until his assassination five years later.<sup>105</sup> These three rings, for which the iconographically related pilgrim flasks in Monza and Bobbio (Fig. 29) provide a terminus post quem of ca. 600, are in turn linked in design, iconography, and style to the marriage rings in London and Leningrad cited above (note 103), which are themselves related to another marriage ring in London (Fig. 25), and one in Berlin.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, this core subgroup of seven rings includes enough peculiarities (e.g., substantial niello decoration, inset stones, square bezels with lobes, the John 14:27 inscription) to draw yet more rings into the seventh century.<sup>107</sup>

Other chronological points of reference for the type include the Dumbarton Oaks ring illustrated in Figure 22, which may date as early as ca. 500, and the marriage ring from Mersin, datable with its treasure to the later sixth to early seventh century. That the former ring is only distantly related to most of the others and that the Mersin ring has just one close relative—the ring illustrated in Figure 24—together reinforce the notion that the large subgroup around the Syracuse octagonal ring constitutes, in the seventh century, the core of the surviving evidence. Indeed, a chronological spread of roughly 150 years would help to explain the rich variety among these rings—as do their re-

<sup>104</sup> Figure 27 = Glasgow, Hunterian Museum. See G. Zacos and A. Vegler, "Marriage Solidi of the Fifth Century," *NCirc* 68.4 (1960), 73 f.

<sup>105</sup> On date and patronage see, most recently, Kitzinger, "Reflections," 62, and note 72. Of all Byzantine marriage rings this one, by virtue of the headgear of its bride and groom, its Syracuse findspot, and its substantial weight, has the strongest claim to courtly (if not actual imperial) patronage.

<sup>106</sup> For the Berlin ring, see Volbach, *Bildwerke*, no. 6810. For the dating of the flasks, see J. Engemann, "Palästinische Pilgerampullen im F. J. Dölger Institut in Bonn," *JbAC* 16 (1973), 25 f.

<sup>107</sup> For the rings with these characteristics, see note 97 above.

puted findspots, ranging from Trebizond, Mersin, and Constantinople, to Syracuse.

The immediate inspiration for this ring type, which has no antecedent in the West,<sup>108</sup> was most likely the marriage *solidus* issued in 450 to mark the union of Marcian and Pulcheria (Fig. 27: *feliciter nubtiis*), or perhaps that of 491, commemorating the marriage of Anastasius and Ariadne (Fig. 23: *feliciter nubtiis*).<sup>109</sup> These coins, in turn, drew on a long Roman numismatic tradition analyzed by Ernst H. Kantorowicz, Louis Reekmans, and, most recently, by Carola Reinsberg.<sup>110</sup> The standard three-part configuration, involving two contracting parties (usually husband and wife) clasping right hands, and a third, facilitating party (characteristically Concordia, concord personified) between them, with hands resting on their shoulders, was in more or less continuous use on Roman coinage of the later second and third centuries. Much like the simpler "concord" compositional conceit of juxtaposed profile portraits (Fig. 7), this formula was used to evoke, celebrate, and propagandize all sorts of imperial and familial alliances, in-

cluding that by marriage in 206 of Caracalla and Plautilla (Fig. 28: *concordia felix*).<sup>111</sup>

It was with the marriage *solidus* of Marcian and Pulcheria in the mid-fifth century that this old secular numismatic formula was Christianized, through the substitution of Christ for Concordia.<sup>112</sup> On the level of implied ritual, this meant that the couple was now coming together under the guidance of Christ-*pronubus* instead of Corcordia-*pronuba*—recognizing that in the traditional Roman wedding it was a once-married matron, the *pronuba*, who brought the couple together, whereas with increasing frequency in early Byzantium it was a priest who performed that function.<sup>113</sup> But even if on some level of implied ceremonial verisimilitude Christ could be imagined as standing in for his symbolic equivalent, the priest, who in turn could be imagined as standing in for his functional equivalent, the matron *pronuba*, the iconography as presented on the coins and rings should be understood as essentially symbolic.<sup>114</sup> Thus, as the union of Caracalla and Plau-

<sup>108</sup>The western *dextrarum iunctio* marriage ring shows instead the joined hands of the couple. See Henkel, *Fingerringe*, no. 87. Interestingly, this ring type was not taken up in Byzantium.

<sup>109</sup>There is an earlier Byzantine marriage issue, of 437 (or 439), whereon Theodosius II takes the place of Concordia in overseeing the union of Licinia Eudoxia and Valentinian III. See, for the three *solidi*, Zacos and Vegler, "Marriage Solidi," 73 f; and Kent, *Coins*, no. 752. For the dynastic implications of these issues, see Reekmans, "La 'dextrarum iunctio,'" 78 f; and K. G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982), 209.

To determine that one *solidus* was the source of the ring type to the exclusion of the other, it would be necessary to date securely one of the rings (or a belt) before the year 491—which has not been done—or to differentiate between the two coin issues iconographically, and then to isolate those distinctive characteristics among the rings. The bride and groom are nimbed, and Christ is apparently beardless on the earlier of the two issues, whereas on the later *solidus* he is clearly bearded, and bride and groom are without nimbi. But while Christ appears to be beardless on some of the rings and the couple perhaps nimbed (Fig. 24), on others he is clearly bearded, and it is apparent that the bride and groom generally do not have nimbi. This could mean that both coins exercised an influence on the rings, although it is also possible that the rings' basic iconographic type, whichever its archetype, was successively adapted to suit prevailing tastes. That many of these rings clearly date well beyond the 5th century, and that at least one (Fig. 22) appears to draw directly on the 491 issue, together suggest that the later coin may have been the proximate source of inspiration for the ring type.

<sup>110</sup>Reekmans, "La 'dextrarum iunctio,'" passim; Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt," passim; and Reinsberg, "Concordia," passim. Also directed toward this same basic subject, but less useful, is an article by C. Frugoni, "L'iconografia del matrimonio e della coppia nel medioevo," *Il matrimonio nella società altomedievale, Settimane* 24 (Spoleto, 1977), II, 901–63.

<sup>111</sup>Figure 28 = London, British Museum. See H. Mattingly and E. A. Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, Vol. IV, Part 1. *Pertinax to Geta* (London, 1936), pl. XII, 7. For the chronology of the type on Roman coinage, see Reekmans, "La 'dextrarum iunctio,'" 34; and Reinsberg, "Concordia," 312.

<sup>112</sup>This transformation on the coinage was conceptually anticipated in an epithalamium by Paulinus of Nola (*Carmen* XXV; Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt," 9): "By those of his who marry in this (Christian) law, Jesus stands as *promubus*, and he changes water into the nectar of wine." For other such evidence of the Christianization of the traditional Roman marriage during this period, see Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 130–41; and Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt," 8 f.

Outside the realm of coinage (notably, on sarcophagi and in gold glass) the *dextrarum iunctio* compositional scheme had already been adapted for a Christian clientele in the West during the 4th century (Reekmans, "La 'dextrarum iunctio,'" 66–77; and Kantorowicz, "Marriage Belt," 8, fig. 7); however, it was done in such a way (e.g., with a diminutive Christ holding leafy crowns over the couple) that no direct iconographic link can be established either with the 5th-century Byzantine marriage *solidi* or with the 6th- to 7th-century Byzantine marriage rings.

<sup>113</sup>See Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 76, 136–38. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote to Proclus regarding the wedding of the latter's daughter (PG 37, col. 316D; Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 137 f): "It is quite voluntarily that I would have assisted at this celebration, in order to put one into the other the hands of the young couple and their two hands in the hands of God."

<sup>114</sup>While the *dextrarum iunctio*, as a graphic, age-old evocation of the contractual and spiritual bond of marriage, was at this period an essential ingredient in the wedding ceremony (B. Kötting, "Dextrarum iunctio," *RAC* 3 [1957], 883), this three-figure iconographic configuration should not be interpreted as a "snapshot" of some moment in the ritual (Reekmans, "La 'dextrarum iunctio,'" 25), no more than the iconography of the Riha and Stuma patens should be taken as literally accurate to a moment in the contemporary communion liturgy. Textual evidence that the *pronuba(us)*, whether matron or priest, actually brought the couple's hands together is slight (Reinsberg, "Con-

tilla is one overseen and characterized by Concordia, the union of Marcian and Pulcheria is one overseen and characterized by Christ. But there is a crucial difference, for while the ideal concord of a pagan marriage could be achieved through the combined virtue of the partners and could be expressed symbolically by their clasped hands (even in the absence of Concordia), the ideal Christian union required Christ's presence. That he was there, united with and uniting the couple, is what was essential, not whatever the bride and groom might be doing in relationship to one another. Thus, while among the Romans a ring showing just clasped hands was sufficient to symbolize marriage and was commonly used ceremonially in conjunction with it, among the Byzantines it would have been insufficient, and in fact, it seems never to have been used. Moreover, while the Romans emphasized the couple's symbolic hand gesture in the presence of Concordia, the Byzantines, as we have already seen, more often than not dispensed with it in the presence of Christ—presumably because it was no longer considered crucial.

How are the various moments or actions represented on the Byzantine rings of this type (Figs. 22, 24–26) to be interpreted? Clearly, the intention was not to show sequential stages of an unfolding marriage ceremony, but rather to convey symbolically the single, simple message that this marriage was one sanctioned by Christ. Of overriding importance is the presence of Christ as the dominant visual element; full length and at the center, he is iconographically equivalent to the dominant cross on rings of the frontal portrait type. But on these rings a more graphic, ceremonially evocative message of Christian benediction is conveyed through Christ's supervisory role in bringing the couple physically together in the *dextrarum iunctio* and, more importantly, through the imposition of his hands upon them in blessing.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, both ac-

cordia," 312), and it would seem unlikely that the early Christian community would have so readily taken over a pagan iconographic scheme (e.g., onto sarcophagi and gold glass) if it were understood to have had some sacramental significance. One should also take as more symbolic than literal the passage from Gregory of Nazianzus cited in note 113 above.

<sup>115</sup>On all but one ring in this series (Fig. 24), Christ appears to be touching the couple, either on the shoulders, the hands, or the head. Since in no instance can it be seen that he (or the Virgin) holds marriage crowns (which in two instances are shown separately, hovering over the couple), this gesture, even when directed toward the head, should be taken as one of blessing and not coronation. A similar situation obtains on coins of the middle Byzantine period whereon the Virgin is seen to touch the crowned head of the emperor in benediction. See P. Grierson, *Byzantine Coinage*, *Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Collection Publications* 4 (Washington, D.C., 1982), 26.

tions are inscriptionally mirrored in the word *euchi* ("prayer") in the exergue of one ring (Fig. 24), which undoubtedly refers to the blessing then customarily pronounced on the couple by an invited priest.<sup>116</sup> In those few instances where both Christ and the Virgin appear on the ring bezel, the former blessing the groom and the latter the bride, the intention seems simply to have been to invoke the Virgin's blessing in addition to that of Christ, much as the help of the Virgin is explicitly invoked on the inscribed hoops of several of these rings (Fig. 25: *Theotoke boethei amen*).<sup>117</sup>

The appearance of *locus sanctus* iconography on the faceted hoops of three rings in this group (e.g., Fig. 26) adds further support to the idea that the early Byzantine marriage ring—indeed, early Byzantine marriage art generally (Figs. 14, 18, 20, 31)—was significantly amuletic.<sup>118</sup> Familiar from and apparently invented for Palestinian *eulogia* oil flasks of the sort preserved at Monza and Bobbio (Fig. 29),<sup>119</sup> these Holy Land scenes were transferred from those miracle-working pilgrimage artifacts to various items of jewelry which, by virtue of their inscriptions and complementary imagery, were clearly intended to function as amulets.<sup>120</sup> Closest to these rings is a distinctive category of medico-magical armband produced in the eastern Mediterranean region during the sixth and seventh centuries (Fig. 30: *heis Theos* ["one God"]),

<sup>116</sup>For early evidence of the blessing of the bride and groom by a priest through the imposition of his hands, and for John Chrysostom's specific references to the *euchai* and *eulogiai* that the priest pronounces as part of the marriage benediction, see Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 104–10, 134 f (PG 54, col. 443).

<sup>117</sup>To support Kantorowicz's ("Marriage Belt," 13) ingenious interpretation of those rings with both Christ and the Virgin as portraying, in response to Eph. 5:25, a typological bond between the terrestrial couple and "the exemplary concord of King and Queen of Heaven," one would need stronger evidence for the textual and iconographic impact of that Ephesians marriage epistle (5:22–33) in early Byzantium. And even then, one would still have to question how *mimesis* could be involved, since unlike the examples cited by Kantorowicz from Roman coinage (his figs. 31a–c), bride and groom are here not imitating but rather receiving the actions of Christ and the Virgin.

<sup>118</sup>For this interpretation of the *locus sanctus* rings' iconography, see Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic," 83; and Kitzinger, "Reflections," 62.

<sup>119</sup>Figure 29 = Monza, Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, ampulla 2. See Grabar, *Les ampoules*, pl. v. The scenes on the ring and flask are: Annunciation, Nativity, Visitation, Presentation in the Temple (ring), Baptism, Crucifixion, Women at the Tomb (flask), Christ Appearing to the Women (ring), Ascension (flask). For an iconographic analysis of these rings, plus that at the Walters Art Gallery sharing these scenes but lacking explicit marriage imagery (Verdier, "An Early Christian Ring"), see Engemann, "Pilgerampullen," 20–22.

<sup>120</sup>For the issue of how, in contemporary belief and piety, this transference of *locus sanctus* image, and with it, sacred power, took place, see G. Vikan, "Sacred Image, Sacred Power," *Icon* (Washington, D.C., 1988), 14–18.



1 Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, cod. 5-3, no. 2, fol. 125r, marriage miniature (photo: Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional)



2 Athens, Byzantine Museum, nos. 7663a, b, marriage crowns (after Drossoyianni, "Byzantine Crowns," pl. 1)



3 Athens, Stathatos Collection, betrothal ring (after *Collection Hélène Stathatos*, II, no. 33)



4 Washington, D.C.,  
Dumbarton Oaks Collection,  
no. 47.18, marriage ring  
(photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



5 Washington, D.C.,  
Dumbarton Oaks Collection,  
no. 53.12.61, marriage ring  
bezel (photo: Dumbarton  
Oaks)



6 London, British Museum,  
marriage ring (photo: the  
Trustees of the British  
Museum)



7 London, British Museum,  
medallion (photo: the Trustees  
of the British Museum)



8 London, British Museum, *solidus*  
(photo: the Trustees of the British  
Museum)



9 London, British Museum, *solidus*  
(photo: the Trustees of the British  
Museum)



10 London, British Museum, marriage ring (photo: the Trustees of the British Museum)



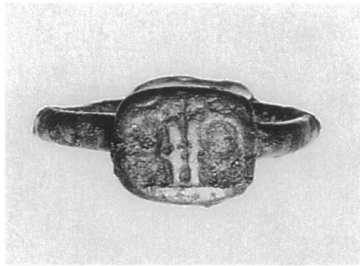
11 Sofia, Narodni Muzeji, no. 2519, marriage(?) box (after Buschhausen, *Metallscrinia*, no. B3)



12 Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, no. 59.60, marriage ring (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



13 Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks, no. 53.12.4, marriage ring (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



14 Houston, Menil Collection, no. R26, marriage ring (photo: Menil Collection)



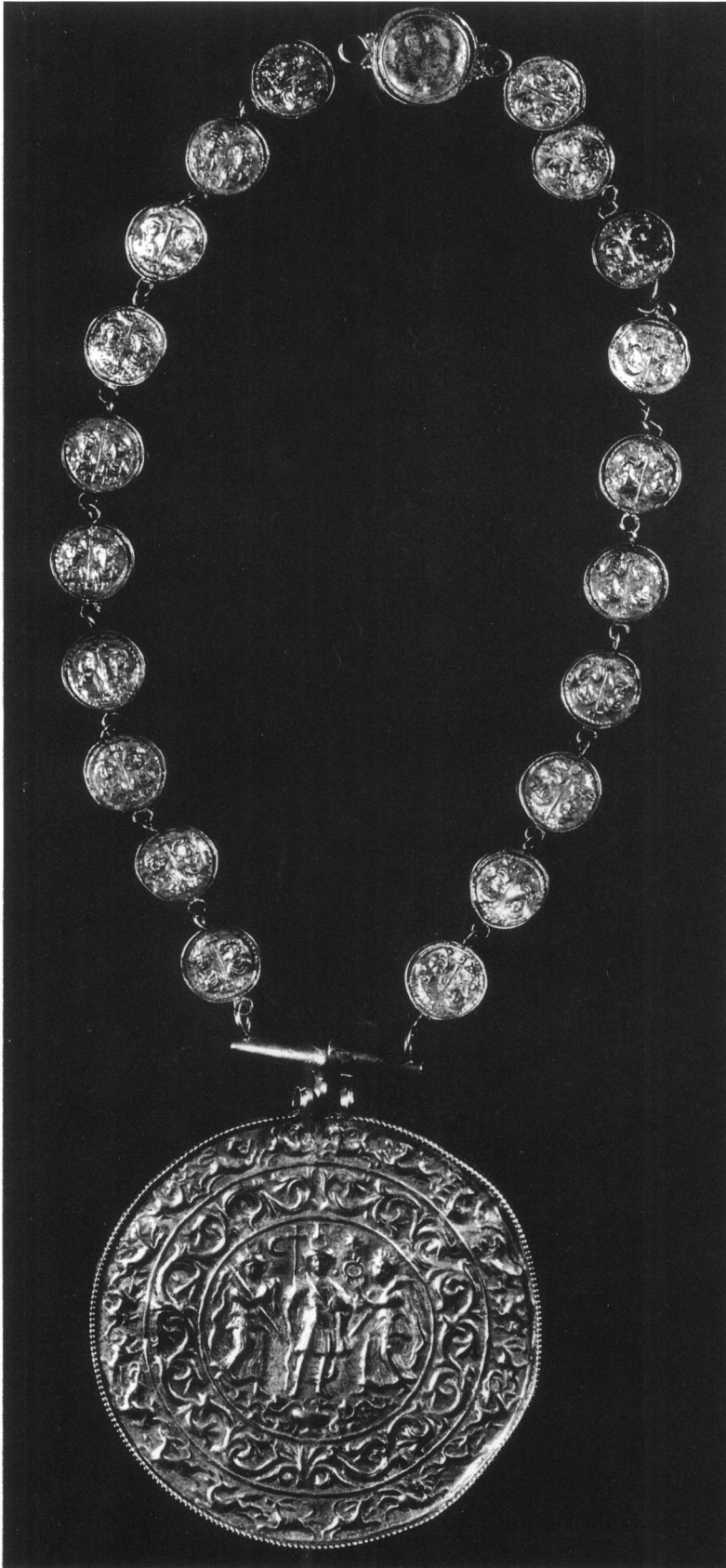
15 Houston, Menil Collection, no. GW12, glass weight (photo: Menil Collection)



16 Geneva, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, flat weight (photo: Musée d'Art et d'Histoire)



17 Athens, Canellopoulos Museum, marriage ring (after Spieser, "Canellopoulos," no. 9)



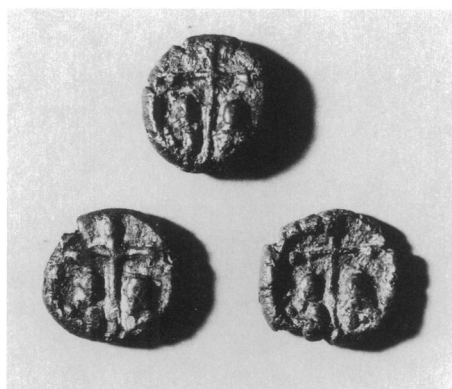
18 Leningrad, State Hermitage Museum, no. *omega* 107–8, marriage necklace (photo: State Hermitage Museum)



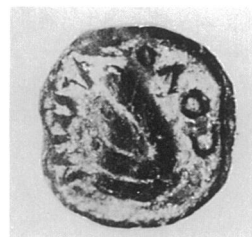
18a *detail*



19 New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1958, no. 58.12, marriage necklace (photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art)



20 Baltimore, the Walters Art Gallery, no. TL90.9.1, 2, 3, amuletic marriage tokens (photo: same)



21 Paris, Robert-Henri Bautier Collection, amuletic token (photo: Robert-Henri Bautier)



22 Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 61.3, marriage ring (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



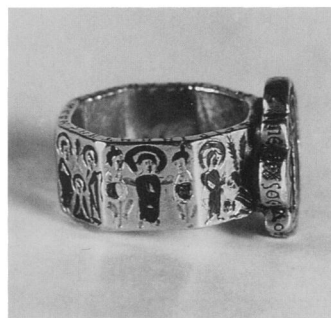
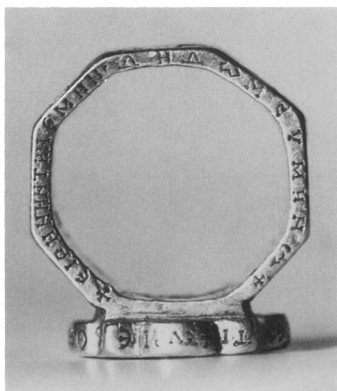
23 Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 59.47, *solidus* mounted as necklace clasp (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



24 Baltimore, the Walters Art Gallery, Zucker Family Collection, no. TL10.1985.048, marriage ring (photo: the Walters Art Gallery)



25 London, British Museum, marriage ring (photo: the Trustees of the British Museum)



26 Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 47.15, marriage ring (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)



27 Glasgow, Hunterian Museum, *solidus*  
(photo: same)



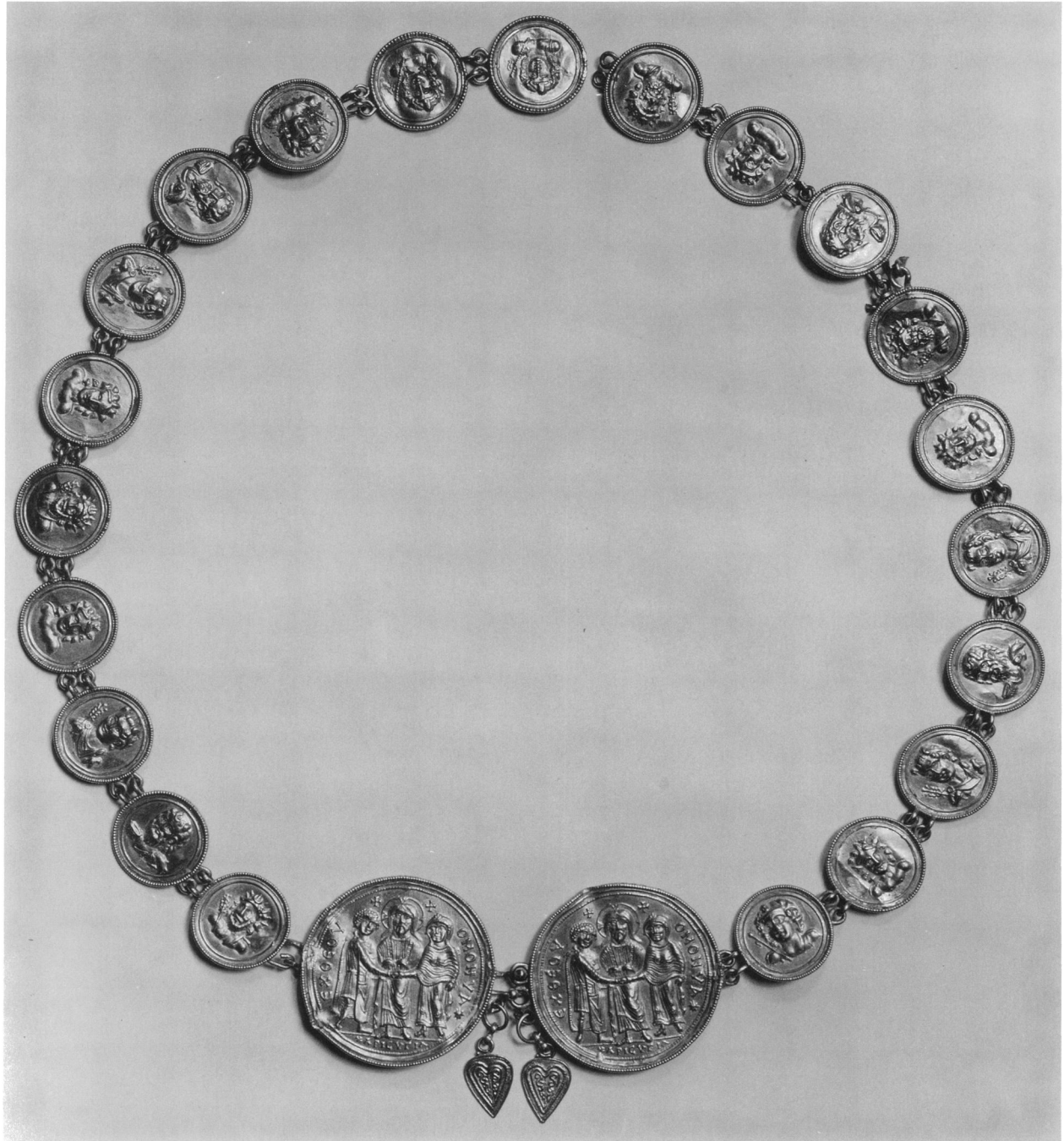
28 London, British Museum, *aureus*  
(photo: the Trustees of the British Museum)



29 Monza, Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, ampulla 2,  
pilgrim flask (after Grabar, *Les ampoules*, pl. v)



30 Columbia, University of Missouri Museum of Art and Archaeology (olim, Cairo, Fouquet  
Collection), amuletic armband (after Maspero, "Bracelets-amulettes," fig. 1)



31 Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 37.33, marriage belt (photo: Dumbarton Oaks)

Psalm 90).<sup>121</sup> Such armbands are distinguished by a few recurrent apotropaic inscriptions—notably Psalm 90: “He that dwells in the help of the Highest . . .”—and by a ribbon-like design highlighted with medallions bearing one or more of the flasks’ *locus sanctus* scenes plus such patently magical images as the Holy Rider, the Chnoubis, the pentalpha, and various “ring signs.”<sup>122</sup> Made of silver or, more rarely, bronze, they were designed specifically for women and, through the magic of the Chnoubis, “the Master of the Womb,” specifically for control of the uterus.<sup>123</sup> While there is nothing about the *locus sanctus* marriage rings to suggest the same amuletic specificity, the parallel between these two object types is suggestive, especially in light of the possible proactive role against the “wandering womb” of the earthen marriage tokens (Fig. 20) discussed above.

Also amuletic is the ring’s very shape, the octagon, which is shared by more than half the rings belonging to the *dextrarum iunctio* iconographic type. This is indicated by the high rate of coincidence between octagonal hoops and rings bearing magical words (e.g., *heis Theos*, Psalm 90), magical symbols (e.g., the Evil Eye, the pentalpha, “ring signs”), and magical figures (e.g., the Holy Rider, the Chnoubis),<sup>124</sup> and also by the fact that the octagon is the shape prescribed by Alexander of Tralles for medico-magical rings designed to treat colic:

Take an iron ring and make its hoop eight-side, and write thus on the octagon: “Flee, flee, O bile, the lark

is pursuing you.” . . . I have used this method many times, and I thought it inappropriate not to draw your attention to it, since it has a power against the illness.<sup>125</sup>

In addition, there is the apparently amuletic inscription from Psalm 5 (“Thou hast crowned us with a shield of favor”), already discussed, which appears on one of the octagonal *locus sanctus* rings, and on a second octagonal ring, without scenes.<sup>126</sup>

Beyond the words *homonoia* and *euchi*, Psalm 5:12, and occasional invocations calling upon the Lord or the *Theotokos* to help husband and wife, one additional text, the opening passage from John 14:27, is inscribed on the hoops of several rings in this series (Fig. 26): “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.”<sup>127</sup> The intention was probably to invoke a generic sort of matrimonial peace, like that implicit in the word *homonoia*, and that referred to repeatedly, in one form or another, in the text of the later Byzantine marriage ceremony: “protect these your servants in peace and harmony.”<sup>128</sup> No doubt the same marital peace was on Dioscorus of Aphrodito’s mind when, in his “Epithalamium for Paul and Patricia,” he wished the couple:

. . . indissoluble harmony, as they hold children and grandchildren on their laps, and a bright and peaceful life, worthy of poetic praise . . .<sup>129</sup>

Final mention should be made of the appearance of this *dextrarum iunctio* iconography outside the realm of rings, on a pair of luxurious gold marriage belts, one from the de Clercq collection now preserved in the Louvre, and the other at Dumbarton Oaks (Fig. 31: *ex Theou homonoia; charis, hygia*).<sup>130</sup> Both are datable with the marriage

<sup>121</sup> Figure 30 = Columbia, University of Missouri Museum of Art and Archaeology. See J. Maspero, “Bracelets-amulettes d’époque byzantine,” *Annales du service des antiquités de l’Égypte* 9 (1908), 246–58, fig. 1 (line drawing); and Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic,” 75. The scenes on the armband are: Annunciation, Nativity, Chnoubis and “ring signs,” Baptism, Crucifixion, Women at the Tomb, Holy Rider, Ascension (far left).

<sup>122</sup> See Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic,” 75–77, and, for an armband bearing the word *hygia*, fig. 10.

<sup>123</sup> For the issue of uterine magic, see the article cited in the preceding note. I took up the gender-specific question as it relates to these armbands in an unpublished paper entitled “The Magic of Silver in Early Byzantium,” presented as part of the 1986 NEH sponsored symposium, “Ecclesiastical Silver Plate in Sixth-Century Byzantium,” jointly hosted by the Walters Art Gallery and Dumbarton Oaks.

<sup>124</sup> For examples of such rings, see Vikan, “Art, Medicine, and Magic,” figs. 13, 15; and *Objects with Semitic Inscriptions*, nos. 25, 340, 347 (and nos. 329, 336, and 338, for faceted hoops that are too crudely executed to be identified specifically as eight sided). Conversely, bezels bearing invocations, monograms, or iconic images are rarely associated with octagonal (or even faceted) hoops. Clearly, this evidence does not square with Kantorowicz’s notion (“Marriage Belt,” 13 f; repeated by Kitzinger, “Reflections,” 72 note 71) that the correlation was with “concord,” by way of a perceived identity of shape between octagonal ring hoops and the octagonal Church of Holy Savior in Antioch, originally devoted to *Homonoia-Concordia*.

<sup>125</sup> Alexander of Tralles, VIII.2. See Alexander von Tralles, ed. and trans. T. Puschmann (Vienna, 1878–79), II, 377.

<sup>126</sup> See the list of rings in note 97 above.

<sup>127</sup> This same passage, which is otherwise unusual among the minor arts of early Byzantium, is found on one of the amuletic silver armbands described above. See W. Froehner, *Collection de la Comtesse R. de Béarn* (Paris, 1905), 10–12. Interestingly, *Theou charis* does not appear on these rings, perhaps because Christ’s active participation in the wedding benediction obviates it.

<sup>128</sup> See Trempela, “He akolouthia,” 133; Kantorowicz, “Marriage Belt,” 11; and Kitzinger, “Reflections,” 72 note 71.

<sup>129</sup> See MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 81 f. But it is also possible that a more specific, amuletic sort of “*kardia* peace” was being invoked through the addition of John 14:17, comparable to that of the magical uterine papyrus quoted above (“do not gnaw into the heart”), since verse 17 concludes with the phrase “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” One is reminded again of that *alagon misos* which, springing from the heart, can inhibit a happy marriage and thus procreation.

<sup>130</sup> Figure 31 = Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Collection, no. 37.33. See Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 38. For the de Clercq belt, see A. de Ridder, *Collection de Clercq. Catalogue, tome VII: Les bijoux et les pierres gravées, première partie, les bijoux* (Paris, 1911),

rings to the sixth to seventh century, both are said to have come from the eastern Mediterranean region, and both show basically the same design: two large central repoussé medallions linking twenty (or 21) smaller medallions. The smaller medallions show dionysiac figure types of various ages, pagan gods (Hermes, Apollo), and *tyches*, whereas the larger clasp medallions bear the familiar *dextrarum iunctio* with Christ as symbolic *pronubus*, much as it appears on the *solidus* of Arcadius and Ariadne (Fig. 23). Disregarding differences in style and quality (the Dumbarton Oaks belt is far superior), the two belts are remarkably alike, and disregarding technique and size, their central clasps are remarkably like marriage ring bezels. Even their inscriptions are similar to those of the rings, with the Dumbarton Oaks belt bearing the words “from God concord; grace, health,” and the de Clercq example showing “wear in good health; grace of God” (*hygienousa phori; Theou charis*).

What is new is not the word *hygia*, but rather its greater prominence, and, more important, the interlinking of the Christianized *dextrarum iunctio* with various pagan figures, notably Dionysos. But in fact, during late Antiquity Christ and Dionysos could easily be accommodated under the encompassing umbrella of marriage. Again, Dioscorus of Aphroditon provides an illuminating textual counterpart, in his “Epithalamium for Athanasius”:

strong Athanasius . . . I have beheld [you] as another new Dionysos; for truly those who look upon the wine, Love's adornment, passing it closely in goblets one to another, have prayed to Poseidon the nurturer for you, O bridegroom . . . .<sup>131</sup>

Wine, “love's adornment,” was an essential part of late antique wedding festivities, as it remains today and as it was at Cana.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, wine seems

no. 1212; and E. Coche de La Ferté, *L'antiquité chrétienne au Musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1958), no. 47. An unpublished early Byzantine belt(?) in the Hermitage, consisting of copper repoussé links, shows in the large medallion at its center the bust portrait of a woman enframed by the words *charis* and *hygia*. This, too, may be a marriage belt.

Among the 7th-century David silver plates there is one (*Age of Spirituality*, no. 432) that portrays the marriage of David and Michal (1 Sam. 18:27) under the authority of King Saul (*-pronubus*). Iconographically it is conceived as a courtly wedding, much like that portrayed on the marriage *solidus* of Licinia Eudoxia and Valentinian III (ca. 437), where Theodosius II takes the place of Concordia-*pronuba* (see note 109 above). The plate includes as well a pair of flute players and, in its exergue, two money bags and a *modius*. These were probably added to evoke the musical merriment of a traditional Roman wedding (Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 130–32), and, perhaps, the dowry gifts.

<sup>131</sup> See MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 86 f. See also Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, I.18.9–10.

<sup>132</sup> For the perpetuation of pagan festivities at early Christian weddings, see Ritzer, *Le mariage*, 130–32.

then to have functioned as well on a more practical, therapeutic level in helping to fulfill the couple's childbearing goal. Epithalamia like that in honor of Athanasius suggest it, and magical papyri substantially confirm it. A seventh-century “prayer for pregnancy” papyrus in the Pierpont Morgan Library contains a Coptic charm to be used by a husband in order to get his wife pregnant.<sup>133</sup> First, as if anticipating the later wedding *Akolouthia*, a series of biblical parallels is invoked: God made man in his own image, God promised “our mother Sarah” a child, et cetera. Then, in order to put the charm to use, the husband is instructed to read its text over a cup of wine which, when offered to his wife, will ensure that she be “graced by the seed of man.”

Not only was Dionysos with his wine an appropriate ingredient in a late antique wedding, whether Christian or pagan, so were any number of mythological models for love and its fulfillment. Dioscorus' “Epithalamium for Matthew” makes this graphically clear:

Bridegroom, bend your mind to love; Zeus himself in heaven, because of Europa's beauty, is known to have become a bull; for love of Leda he was esteemed a swan. Carry your Europa over the threshold, not over the sea; go to bed with your Leda, but don't worry about wings.<sup>134</sup>

But what, finally, of the belt itself; where did this seemingly utilitarian article of jewelry fit into the marriage ritual? According to the Greek *Vita* of St. Alexis, it was in the nuptial chamber that the groom gave his bride her (ring and) wedding belt (*zone*).<sup>135</sup> And where more appropriately could this have taken place, for following the protocol of the Roman wedding, it was there on the nuptial couch that the groom—after the bride had been delivered by the matron-*pronuba*—loosed the *nodus herculeus* which, hours earlier, she had fastened on the girdle with which her wedding gown (and virgin's modesty) had been secured.<sup>136</sup> Belt, wine, Christ, and Dionysos were in that moment symbolically and functionally intertwined in the literal fulfillment of the mandate of marriage.

The history of marriage-related art in Byzantium, insofar as it constitutes an identifiable tradition in its own right, is one substantially confined

<sup>133</sup> See F. D. Friedman, *Beyond the Pharaohs: Egypt and the Copts in the 2nd to 7th Centuries A.D.* (Providence, R.I., 1989), no. 108.

<sup>134</sup> See MacCoull, *Dioscorus*, 108.

<sup>135</sup> See A. Amiaud, *La légende syriaque de Saint Alexis, l'homme de Dieu* (Paris, 1889), 12 f; and Ross, *Catalogue*, no. 38.

<sup>136</sup> See Carcopino, *Rome*, 82.

to late Antiquity, to rings, and to the wealthy. Indeed, it is at once characterized and circumscribed by two superb rings at Dumbarton Oaks: the double-profile signet of Aristophanes and Vigilantia from the early fifth century (Fig. 4) and the octagonal *locus sanctus* amulet ring of Peter and Theodote from the mid-seventh century (Fig. 26). Moreover, much as the Byzantine marriage rite developed directly from the Roman ceremony, so the Byzantine marriage ring developed directly from its Roman antecedent. Sequentially, over half a millennium, Rome and Byzantium engendered an unbroken tradition of marriage art thematically dominated by the Stoic ideal of the harmonious couple—by paired portraits, by the *dextrarum iunctio*, and by the inscribed words *concordia* and *homonoia*. Throughout, coinage remained the crucible for iconographic invention and the reservoir for figure types, and throughout, iconography remained symbolic and “portraiture” anonymous.

Superficially, the bezel of a Byzantine marriage ring of the seventh century (Fig. 26) looks much like a Roman commemorative marriage coin of the third (Fig. 28), and in fact, there is a direct genealogical link between the two. But over the centuries much had changed, beyond the mere substitution of the Greek *homonoia* for *concordia*. Not only has Christ-pronubus taken the place of Concordia-pronuba, the Virgin Mary has been inserted beside him, dispensing her blessing touch to the head of the bride just as Christ does to the groom, while the couple stands passively apart, facing forward. What is paramount now is no longer the traditional contractual gesture of clasped hands, but rather Christian benediction, since among the Byzantines a harmonious marriage was no longer viewed as an achievement of husband and wife, but as a gift from God. The old Stoic ideal has here

been given a Christian reinterpretation, and reflecting that, marriage iconography and marriage inscriptions have acquired their own distinctly Christian character.

There is another critical distinction to be drawn between a Byzantine marriage ring of the seventh century and its Roman antecedent—or, for that matter, its fifth-century Byzantine antecedent. Over those two hundred years or so the very function of the marriage ring—beyond its immediate ceremonial role—had been fundamentally altered, insofar as what almost invariably used to be a signet was now more often than not an amulet (and never a signet). *Hygia* inscriptions, octagonal hoops, *locus sanctus* scenes, and the “shield of favor” excerpt from the Psalms all contributed to the marriage ring’s new amuletic empowerment, which is most appropriately interpreted in light of the demographic concerns pervading Byzantine marriage law and poetry as relating specifically to childbearing.

But even as late as the sixth and seventh centuries, the pre-Christian roots of Byzantium’s marriage art (and marriage) are still unmistakably present, most notably on the Dumbarton Oaks marriage belt (Fig. 31). In much the same way that Dioscorus of Aphrodito invokes God’s protection on the wedding couple almost in the same breath that he evokes for them the model of Leda and the swan (while adjuring the evil eye), the goldsmith of the Dumbarton Oaks belt interlinks Christ with Dionysos and his *thiasos*, while simultaneously invoking an amuletic sort of “health,” *ex Theou*. Such was the breadth and richness of marriage art in early Byzantium.

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